Evidence presented at meetings of the
All Party Parliamentary Group on Bullying
2011-2016

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Introduction

This collection of academic papers, research documents and reports of first hand experiences presented at the APPG on Bullying between 2011 and 2016 provides evidence of the effects bullying has on children and young people from their experience at school and how they drop out, to the long-term consequences for health, employment and relationships.

The aim of the collection is to draw politicians' attention to the possible reasons why there are some 16,000 children between the ages of 11 and 15 in England who ticked a box in a survey questionnaire to say that bullying was the primary reason for them not attending school. A further 77,000 stated that bullying was a contributory factor to absenting themselves from school rather than face continued ostracism, humiliation or violence.

2011

30th November 2011
Dr Carrie Herbert MBE
Red Balloon Learner Centre Group

Red Balloon – what Red Balloon does

According to a report by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)[1], there are 16,500 children in England and Wales aged 11-15 absent from state school due to severe bullying. (Please note this does not including Year 11s.)

And this raises the question - where are these children? Schools often deny the fact that some children 'disappear' from their roll because of severe bullying. Some schools acknowledge that bullying has affected some children, and agree that these children are no longer on their roll. They also acknowledge that they have children who have 'anxiety problems' often in the transition from primary to secondary school who attend school infrequently (Red Balloon provision might be appropriate for this group of children), but as for admitting children leave their school as a result of severe bullying, this is not acknowledged.

The report[1] also states that 43.8% of parents who had decided to "elect for home education" had done so because the child had been bullied. NatCen had anticipated a figure around 10% and were surprised at the high result.

One interpretation of this figure is that parents who have severely bullied children choose to educate their children at home. Does this assume they are particularly well equipped to home-educate or have they chosen this route because the alternatives are grim? They have two alternatives: to witness their child's distress at being frequently beaten up/bullied/taunted or routine ostracism or for the threat of a court appearance for 'allowing' their child's truancy?

> *Most parents / carers / families do not know how to cope with a depressed and often suicidal teenager. C came to a Red Balloon for seven weeks for two days per week. She arrived in a state of extreme emotional breakdown, shivering, fragile and unable to cope with 'normal' verbal interactions. After a few weeks she was able to look at people when talking to them, smile and feel comfortable with her peers. Her mother also looked visibly more relaxed as her daughter became more confident.*

Enquiries with one (large) (anonymous) LA disclosed that over 700 children were on their EHE register. The official from that LA who spoke to us thought the percentage of severely bullied children on that EHE register was in excess of 50%. There are 354 Local Authorities in England and Wales.

If each LA has on average only 50 children on its EHE register due to bullying, that would account for the 16,500 children identified in the report[1].

The report[1] also stated that 83% of parents citing bullying as the reason for their child's absence from school also cited associated medical issues.

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[1] "Estimating the prevalence of young people absent from school due to bullying" National Centre for Social Research (May 2011)

If a child is signed off by a doctor as being unable to go to school due to medical reasons, it seems that there is some inconsistencies as to what education that child may receive. The 1996 Education Act (Section 19) states that "Each local education authority shall make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school for those children of compulsory school age who, *by reason of illness*, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them". Details are fleshed out in 'Access to education for children and young people with medical needs' (DfES as was - Nov 2001). So if a student is 'signed off' by a medical practitioner, the local authority is obliged by law to provide education or, rather, ensure that education is provided.

However, from anecdotal evidence from parents and from some LA schools Red Balloon gathers that in many instances no education is provided and the child languishes at home for months and in some cases years. In these cases what happens to the AWPU for that child?

Red Balloon recovery statistics are impressive: Children arrive having had zero attendance for weeks if not months and by the time they are recovered their overall attendance at a centre has been on average 85%. Red Balloon Centres help children gain up to eight GCSEs at grade A*-C. Before coming to a RB their predicted grades were substantially lower than this or else due to absence they would have gained none. These are improvements which the DfE welcome and seek as both are used as OFSTED measures.

However, it would appear that children who would benefit from a Red Balloon provision are either not on a school roll or have a medical certificate for prolonged absence.

> *B was referred to a Red Balloon. He had not been out of the house for two years apart from hospital visits. His life was sitting in a chair watching TV and eating. He was depressed, obese, and mobility was limited. He was with RB for 12 months and is now undertaking a course as a mechanic at a training centre. He is confident, has a sense of humour and does not say 'no' to trying something new.*

> *L spent two years with Red Balloon. Her bullying by both boys and girls started with name calling because she was different in her fashion statement. The bullying got worse and turned sexual and after a sexual assault outside the school she refused to attend. The school tried to sort the problem out but L could not cope with the situation. Mum referred L to Red Balloon and we felt we would be able to support her and offered her a place. L's mental health was serious; she sees a counsellor. She found it difficult to build up relationships, had panic attacks and needed to be collected in the morning to get into the Centre. Funding could not be arranged for L as the school changed status and it was impossible to get records. L took GCSE in English, Maths and Science and moved on to college.*

Local authorities are reluctant to identify EHE children who would benefit from a Red Balloon provision. Local authorities do not receive AWPU for EHE children so they claim to have no funding for these children and as Red Balloon is an independent, rather than a state, school, they say they cannot claim AWPU for these children.

However, the benefit to society of recovering these children is estimated at between £200,000 and £500,000 per child by the time the child is 25 years old, based on saving benefits and net contribution to society in tax and national insurance plus savings to the NHS. The cost of the recovery of a child is on average £22,000 per child (4 terms at £5,500 per term).

[Insertion note: Local authorities are required by law to keep a register of those who are EHE, although if an EHE child moves from one LA to another the record is lost as the first LA will delete the record and will not transfer the data to the receiving LA (due to the Data Protection Act), so the receiving LA never knows about the child unless the parent contacts them.]

Recommendation: The APPC should make a FoI request to all LAs asking for details of the number of children on the EHE register and the reasons given by the parents for EHE.

Conclusions of NatCen Report 2011:
Estimating the prevalence of young people absent from school due to bullying

The findings of this study make an important contribution to a little researched or documented field of enquiry. Comparatively little is known about the impact of bullying on the various forms of non-attendance at school including frequent school absence and elective home education.

The number of young people aged 11-15 absent from state secondary school because of bullying is considerable higher than it was previously thought – with our best estimate being 16,493 (+/- 3,147). Specifically, we would estimate that this number of young people are frequently absent from school primarily because of bullying. The number who are absent for a range of reasons, of which bullying is one but not the most important, is much higher.

While the proportion of young people for whom the main reason for school absence is bullying is about what we expected (3.4%, whereas our sample design assumed this would be in the region of 3%), for electively home educated young people, it is considerably larger (18.4%, whereas our sampling assumptions placed this in the 10% range).

Inevitably, reasons for school absence and choosing home education are not straight-forward, with different reasons having the potential to interact with one and other. This is highlighted by the fact that the average number of reasons selected by those parents who identified bullying as a reason for school absence or home education was more than four. For young people who are frequently absent from school, there is a particularly close relationship between experiences of bullying and health, which would warrant further investigation in furthering our understanding of the links between bullying and school absence.
http://www.natcen.ac.uk

2012

2nd July 2012
Lauren Seager-Smith
Anti Bullying Alliance

Research shows that at any one time 16,000 pupils ages 11-16 miss school due to bullying[2]. This is a significant number of days lost and is likely to have a significant impact on pupil attainment. We would like to look at how these absences are currently being recorded, if at all, so we can make schools more accountable for children who are missing education due to experiencing bullying.

When we look at pupil absence statistics we can see that 22.8% in 2015[3] were unauthorised absence. The 22.8% breaks down into:

- Family holiday not agreed – 6.2%
- Arrived late – 1.5%
- Other unauthorised circumstances – 13.7%
- No reason yet – 1.4%

We would like to know more about the 13.7% who have 'other unauthorised circumstances'. The Anti-Bullying Alliance has heard from some local authorities that when they have drilled down into that data that there have been a number of unauthorised absences due to experiencing bullying.

It would be very useful to:
- o   conduct research into the 'other unauthorised category' to find out who they are and why they are in this category and to see if any of them are experiencing bullying;

- o   to test with stakeholders how effective, practical and useful it would be for schools to be required to provide more information about those who are in this category.

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[2] National Centre for Social Research, Estimating the prevalence of young people absent from school due to bullying, May 2011 http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/22457/estimating-prevalence-young-people.pdf
[3] Unauthorised absence statistics 2015: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence

2 July 2012
Prof. Peter Smith
Goldsmiths, University of London
School bullying (updated 2017)[4]

Bullying is a major concern for many children and young people. For example the Staying Safe Survey (DCSF, 2009) reported that bullying was the second highest concern expressed about their safety by children/young people aged 12 to 17. It affects a significant minority of children. The EU Kids Online project reported findings on traditional bullying and cyberbullying from 25 European countries (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Ólafsson, 2011). Overall, 19% said that they had been bullied in the past 12 months (21% in the UK), with 9% saying this had happened at least once or twice a month. Similarly 12% said they had bullied others at all, with 5% saying this had happened at least once or twice a month.

Anyone can be a victim of bullying, but some children are more at risk – those who are shy, or have a disability, or are different in some way such as sexual orientation, race or religion (Smith, 2014). As with many kinds of SEN, there is evidence for both genetic and environmental factors in being a victim of bullying. In England and Wales the Environmental Risk Study of over 1000 twin pairs (Ball et al., 2008) found strong genetic influence on children's victimisation status at 9-10 years; MZ [identical] twins had more similar victimisation experiences than DZ [non-identical] twins. These genetic factors may operate through various mechanisms including personality disposition, emotion regulation, or social cognition. This study also found that school factors were associated with victim risk; if a school does not respond adequately the victimisation is more likely to continue.

There is plentiful evidence that being a victim of bullying can have very detrimental immediate as well as longer term effects – especially for those who suffer prolonged bullying, who have not been able to cope with it successfully, or have not received adequate support from teachers and schools. These effects include academic attainment, as well as mental health issues. A study in East London (Rothon et al., 2010) found a significant association of victimisation with poorer academic achievement. Meta-analyses of many reports from longitudinal studies (Ttofi, Farrington, & Lösel, 2011) show that even after adjustments for a range of other factors, victims at school were at greater risk of later depression. These effects can be substantial and long term (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Data from the Environmental Risk Study (Fisher et al., 2012) found that exposure to frequent bullying in 12-year-old children predicted higher rates of self-

[4]Arseneault, L., Bowes, L., & Shakoor, S. (2009). Bullying victimization in youths and mental health problems: 'Much ado about nothing'? *Psychological Medicine*, 29, 1-13.

Ball, H.A., Arseneault, L., Taylor, A., Maughan, B., Caspi, A. & Moffitt, T.E. (2008). Genetic and environmental influences on victims, bullies and bully-victims in childhood. *Journal of Child Psychiatry and Psychiatry* 49, 104-112.13.

DCSF (2009). *Staying Safe Survey: Key findings: Bullying*. London: DCSF.

Fisher, H. L., Moffitt, T. E., Houts, R. M., Belsky, D. W., Arseneault, L. & Caspi, A. (2012). Bullying victimisation and risk of self harm in early adolescence: longitudinal cohort study. *British Medical Journal*, 344, e2683.

Kim, Y-S., & Leventhal, B. (2008). Bullying and suicide: A review. International Journal of Adolescent Mental Health, 20, 133-154.

Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. & Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and Safety on the Internet: The Perspective of European Children. Full Findings.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online.

Rothon, C., Head, J., Klineberg, E., & Stansfeld, S. (2010). Can social support protect bullied adolescents from adverse outcomes? A prospective study on the effects of bullying on academic achievement and mental health of adolescents at secondary schools in East London. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34, 579-588.

Schreier, A., Wolke, D., Thomas, K., Horwood, J., Hollis, C., Gunnell, D., Lewis, G., Thompson, A., Zammit, S., Duffy, L., Salvi, G. & Harrison, G. (2009). Prospective study of peer victimization in childhood and psychotic symptoms in a nonclinical population at age 12 years. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 66, 527-536.

Smith, P. K. (2014). *Understanding School Bullying: Its Nature & Prevention Strategies*. Sage Publications.

Ttofi, M. M., Farrington, D. P., & Lösel, F. (2011). Do the victims of school bullies tend to become depressed later in life? A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research,* 3, 63-73.

Wolke, D. & Lereya, S. T. (2015). Long-term effects of bullying. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 100, 879-885.

harm, even after taking account of prior emotional problems. Suicide, although rare, can be an outcome to which victim experiences can be a significant contributor (Kim et al., 2009).

It can be difficult to be certain that adverse outcomes are actually caused by the experience of being a victim, rather than both being due to other factors. But there is now compelling evidence that the victim experience is a causative factor. For example, a longitudinal analysis of ALSPAC data from Bristol (Schreier et al., 2009) found that being a victim of chronic or severe bullying at 8 or 10 years was associated with substantially greater odds of psychotic symptoms at age 12, even controlling for other prior psychopathology, family adversity, and child's IQ. Arseneault et al. (2009) have reviewed studies relevant to this issue, and confirmed that being the victim of bullying contributes independently to children's mental health problems, and can have long-lasting effects.

In summary, through a combination of environmental and genetic factors, some children may experience prolonged and severe bullying which can affect their well-being, mental health, and academic attainment. As the Red Balloon Learner Centre Group argues, this fits the legal definition of 'special educational needs'. Also, we know from the research commissioned by Red Balloon (the NatCen Report), that some thousands of children are often absent from school as a result of severe bullying. Intensive care units, such as those provided by the Red Balloon Learner Centres, can help these children recover. Thus, besides being a reasonable and logical use of the SEN definition, being able to statement such children as SEN will be very helpful and worthwhile.

17th October 2012
Dr Bernard Trafford, Headmaster, Newcastle upon Tyne Royal Grammar School
Schools and Bullying: Knowing our Limits

There is something rather charming about us schools: we desperately want to get it right for every child. Actually, we do get it pretty right for them, just about: and we do so most of the time.

But we don't, cannot do so absolutely all of the time. And we are not good at recognising that fact. And, when we find we are not coping with it, we don't always behave well.

We don't like to admit to our limitations, or our shortcomings. So when it's a matter of bullying – which brings with it all kinds of feelings of guilt, sorrow, hurt and outrage – we tend to blame the victim (for not telling us openly or soon enough): or we blame the parent (for hiding it, being over-protective, whatever). And we say we could have sorted it out, if only they'd let us.

It's not true, of course. We always feel awful when bullying happens despite our best efforts (and those efforts are strenuous, thoughtful, methodical and thorough). We feel we should be able to fix it. Hence why some schools, heads or senior teachers can be in denial when it goes wrong. On such occasions, victims and their parents are doubly hurt – by the failure to prevent the bullying, and by the school's reluctance to accept that it got it wrong. Pain on more pain.

Any head who says there is no bullying in their school is lying – or otherwise hopelessly deluded. In schools we throw young people together and, as in all walks of human life at all ages, bullying happens. A kind, thoughtful and proactive school will minimise it. But it will still happen.

I can think of a young woman, now 27 or 28 (and still in touch with one of my former colleagues) who was, in effect, bullied out of school at the age of 16. She was charming, a very talented dancer: she shone in a school show. Two jealous girls made her life a misery. Clearly there were some insecurities in the victim's background: talk of eating disorders, for example. Now in her late 20s she still deals with eating disorders. She is a dance instructor: but she bears the scars.

Curiously, the two bullies also left the school: all three girls made fresh starts in other places for the sixth form, and all did quite well at A level. There was terrible damage to the victim, and denial by the bullies and their parents – arguably another kind of damage.

I can think of a different case. A 12-year-old boy who, after just one year in secondary school, didn't come back in September for Year 8. His mother said he'd been bullied on account of his ginger hair. We had no inkling it was happening in the school. They didn't tell us, she said,

because they reported bullying in his primary school: the school had acted heavy-handedly and all it had done was make it worse. So they didn't tell us: and without us being able to do anything, he simply left and went to another school. We pray that the pattern hasn't repeated itself there: experience suggests that it probably has, or will.

Those two cases simply serve to illustrate why in schools we feel so bad when we can't solve a bullying issue.

But the point of my talk is to say that we should stop beating ourselves up. We must do everything we can, employ all the strategies we know and experiment with new ones, to prevent bullying. But we should stop being too proud or too insecure to accept that we won't win in every case.

The overwhelming majority of truants/school refusers do what they do because of bullying or the fear of bullying. The merely 'disaffected' or alienated are a very small proportion. Sadly for children bullied out of school, local authorities offer few alternatives. Some suggest sending a bullied child to a pupil referral unit, alongside those who may have been excluded for behavioural reasons. Others point to a school's inclusion or nurture unit: these can be hugely effective but for, the child for whom school becomes truly impossibility, these are not viable alternatives.

The local authorities, their welfare officers and those who help children out of school, can be as inflexible as schools, equally unwilling to admit that they haven't got all the answers.

That's where Red Balloon comes in, almost uniquely. Red Balloon frequently boasts that it gets children back into school. More accurately, in nearly every case it gets them back into mainstream education, but that's by looking after them until they are 16 when they can go to a college of one sort or another. College life is not the same as the tyranny of the school year group, the hectic classroom, the thronging corridors.

But Red Balloon has one enormous difficulty: it's almost unheard of for local authorities or schools to fund the education of a bullied child in a Red Balloon Learner Centre. Schools, always short of money, are reluctant (sometimes unable) to devolve funding to a Red Balloon Learner Centre. They can become mired in bureaucracy with talk of Service Level Agreements and other procedures. And local authorities, equally strapped for cash, simply won't find the money.

There is, of course, legislation in place that in effect fines schools if they do 'lose' children: this is to discourage them from wilfully excluding. But that protection for difficult children becomes a lack of protection for the bullied child. There needs to be a different mechanism, a freeing up, a willingness to fund alternatives: and a readiness to accept in the first place that school or local authority doesn't have the answer, and that a radical alternative is needed.

This affects a very few children in a school or town: but nationally it adds up to thousands, and thousands of lives are wrecked. They are wrecked mainly because our institutions, our systems and our bureaucracy are so inflexible. In fact, they are intransigent.

Surely it's time that we can and must make a change.

26th November 2012
Dr Maria Ttofi: Department of Criminology, University of Cambridge

Abstract

Background: Although bullying and delinquency share similar risk factors, no previous systematic review has ever been conducted to examine possible links between school bullying and criminal offending later in life.

Aim: To investigate the extent to which bullying perpetration at school predicts offending later in life, and whether this relation holds after controlling for other major childhood risk factors.

Method: Results are based on a thorough systematic review and meta-analysis of studies measuring school bullying and later offending. Effect sizes are based on both published and unpublished studies; longitudinal investigators of 28 studies have conducted specific analyses for our review.

Result: The probability of offending up to 11 years later was much higher for school bullies than for non-involved students [odds ratio (OR) = 2.50; 95% confidence interval (CI): 2.03–3.08]. Bullying perpetration was a significant risk factor for later offending, even after controlling for major childhood risk factors (OR = 1.82, 95% CI: 1.55–2.14). Effect sizes were smaller when the follow-up period was longer and larger when bullying was assessed in older children. The age of participants when outcome measures were taken was negatively related with effect sizes. Finally, the summary effect size did not decrease much as the number of controlled risk factors increased.

Conclusion: School bullying is a strong and specific risk factor for later offending. Effective anti-bullying programmes should be promoted, and could be viewed as a form of early crime prevention. Such programmes would have a high benefit: cost ratio.

2013

14th June 2013
Papers prepared by Fran Thompson, Goldsmith's College, for Baronesses Brinton and Jones prior to the debate in the House of Lords on the level of education support and mental health provision available to children who are severely bullied at school.

Prevalence of victimisation especially in children with special educational needs

There is a large body of research showing that school bullying affects a substantial minority of pupils in school; some 10% may be regular victims of bullying. Based upon self-reports of school children aged 11 to 15 years from 35 countries it was estimated that 10.9% were being bullied 2 or 3 times a month or more (Due et al., 2009). The behaviours to which they are subject include name-calling, physical assault or threats of physical assaults, humiliation, ostracism, cyber bullying and having their personal possessions trashed. We also know that children with SEN are at substantially greater risk of being bullied, than other children; and have more absences from school because of it (Mishna, 2003; McLaughlin, Byers and Oliver, 2011, EHRC, 2011)[5].

Effects of victimisation, and coping

Being victimised at school is reliably associated with distressing symptoms and poor mental

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[5] Due, P., Merlo, J., Harel-Fisch, Y., Damsgaard, M.T., Holstein, B. E., Hetland, J., Currie, C., Gabhainn, S.N., Gaspar de Matos, M. and Lynch, J. (2009). Socioeconomic Inequality in Exposure to Bullying During Adolescence: A Comparative, Cross-Sectional, Multilevel Study in 35 Countries. *American Journal of Public Health,* 99, 907-914.
Mishna, F. (2003), 'Learning disabilities and bullying: Double jeopardy'. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 36: 336-347.
McLaughlin, C., Byers, R. and Oliver, C. (2011). Responding to Bullying among Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. University of Cambridge/ Anti-Bullying Alliance.
EHRC, 2011: The equality duties and schools: Lessons for the future.
http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/EqualityAct/PSED/equality_duties_and_schools_policy_paper.pdf

health of children, both during the time they attend school and for many years afterwards (Rigby, 2003; Ttofi, Farrington and Lösel, 2011). Arseneault, Bowes and Shakoor (2009) showed that being the victim of bullying contributes independently to children's mental health problems, and can have long-lasting effects. A longitudinal analysis of ALSPAC data from Bristol (Schrier et al., 2009) found that being a victim of chronic or severe bullying at 8 or 10 years was associated with substantially greater odds of psychotic symptoms at age 12, even controlling for other prior psychopathology, family adversity, and child's IQ. Both in this country and internationally, suicidal outcomes can be the most tragic consequences of inaction (Kim and Leventhal, 2008)[6].

14th June 2013
Speech notes ahead of Children and Families Bill
Prepared by Red Balloon[7].

Research shows that bullying can have such severe consequences on children that they cannot attend school. There are 16,000 self-excluding children in England (between 11 and 15 years). They are very 'ordinary' children.

Many develop temporary mental health issues resulting in self-harm, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, anorexia, and suicidal tendencies. The children want to be able to go to school, to have friends, and may well have aspirations of going to sixth-form college and university.

In some schools children who are being badly bullied and don't want to go to school are offered places in the school's 'Inclusion unit'. These units are largely for disruptive and difficult children or children who have learning difficulties. The children we are talking about do not fall into this category. In these Units they are either further bullied or find the work too easy.   If children self-exclude from school for reasons of bullying there is no alternative provision other than Pupil Referral Units (for challenging and aggressive children – the bullies).

These children are eminently recoverable with a short stay (approximately one year) in an intensive care unit for such children.

Children are often absent from schools for months and in some cases year.

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[6] Arseneault, L., Bowes, L., and Shakoor, S. (2009). Bullying victimization in youths and mental health problems: 'Much ado about nothing'? *Psychological Medicine*, 29, 1-13.
Kim, Y-S., and Leventhal, B. (2008). Bullying and suicide: A review. International *Journal of Adolescent Mental Health*, 20, 133-154.
Rigby, K. (2003). Consequences of bullying in schools. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 48, 583-591.
Schreier, A., Wolke, D., Thomas, K., Horwood, J., Hollis, C., Gunnell, D., Lewis, G., Thompson, A., Zammit, S., Duffy, L., Salvi, G. and Harrison, G. (2009). Prospective study of peer victimization in childhood and psychotic symptoms in a non-clinical population at age 12 years. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 66, 527-536.

Ttofi, M.M., Farrington, D.R. and Lösel, F. (2011). Do the victims of school bullies tend to become depressed later in life? A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 3, 63-73.

[7] **Case studies (2013)**

Case 1. Year 11 girl. At the end of year 9, CAMHs requested a referral into a Red Balloon, given the severe bullying and subsequent trauma experienced by the student. The LA argued that the student was on roll at an academy, and so the decision to refer or not remained with the academy. The academy was perfectly clear that it would not consider any referral into alternative provision for cost reasons. The academy has its own provision for 'vulnerable' students and argued that the student's needs could be met at this 'on-site unit'.
The student is now approaching the end of year 11. She has not attended at all since February. There were multiple issues prior to that date and she has no chance of attaining any qualifications this year. In a recent review the representative of CAMHs argued that without a therapeutic element to the programme it was doomed to failure from the outset.
Case 2. Year 10 girl – this student has refused to attend school since alleged severe bullying during KS3. School has its own on-site provision, but there is no therapeutic element and the student has consistently refused to engage. Mum takes her in every day (this causes huge friction within the home). The student then runs back home as soon as Mum leaves. Currently Mum sits with her daughter for an hour a day at school, but little, if any, learning is taking place; relationships at home are damaged by the daily battle, and the prospect of any academic success is nil.

Some parents are threatened with prosecution for their child's absence. The school then 'advise' the parent to remove their children from the school roll to avoid prosecution. Once a child has been taken off roll by a parent the LA and school have no responsibility for that child's education.

It is Red Balloon Learner Centre's experience over seventeen years that over 85% of the children that have been to a RB-Centre have a 'learning difficulty' when they first arrive. This manifests itself in behaviours such as: an inability to think, concentrate, speak logically, focus, write, calculate, conduct lucid conversations, organize themselves, play, work with others, be a team player, be empathetic or to reflect on their own behaviour.

Many children who are severely bullied do not have 'special educational needs' prior to this.

Most of the children who fall into this category are intelligent, well-behaved, cooperative and looking for self-improvement. Most are eminently recoverable given the appropriate environment. Thus the SEN provision should be regarded as being temporary, short-lived and intensive.

If it was accepted that severely bullied, self-excluded children who are out of school are children with special educational needs and they could be 'statemented' (swiftly and efficiently within less than a school term) and referred to a specialist intensive care unit for a short-term placement on a combined academic and therapeutic programme, the vast majority of these children would recover and be able to return to mainstream education.

15th July 2013
Harry Fletcher and Suky Bhaker
Anti-Bullying Strategy

Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill 2013

On the 21st June Tracey Crouch MP (Conservative) successfully tabled a series of amendments to clauses 1 and 21 of the above bill to extend civil injunctions and criminal behaviour orders to persons engaged in an act of serious bullying.

'... bullying" means behaviour capable of causing physical or mental harm to a second person, including self-harm; or to arouse apprehension or fear in the second person for his or her own safety or that of any other person'

The amendment means that an additional condition is added to enable a court to issue a civil injunction to prevent nuisance, annoyance and bullying. It states -

'(2A) the second condition is that the court is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the respondent has engaged or threatens to engage in conduct capable of causing physical or mental harm to a second person, including self-harm; or to arouse apprehension or fear in the second person for his or her own safety or that of any other person ("bullying").'

The amendments were passed at the committee stage.

The amendments to clause 1 extended the powers of civil courts to issue injunctions to include bullying. There are time limits and the alleged bully would be supervised under the conditions of the bill. The bill also gives power of arrest to the police if the person who is being anti-social threatens to use violence against any person. This power of arrest does not apply to bullies, we are working under the assumption this was the deliberate intention of Tracey Crouch. Should any person breach the injunction they would be subject to arrest and depending on the seriousness liable to a fine, community or custodial sentence. We formed the view that the purpose of extending injunctions to persons accused of serious bullying, particularly children was that in most cases the individual bully would have a requirement that they be supervised and that the reason for the bullying behaviour would therefore be addressed. We also believe that any custodial sentence would be a matter of last resort.

Criminal behaviour orders

The amendment also extends to criminal behaviour orders to cover individuals involved in serious bullying behaviour. If such a person is convicted of a criminal offence then a court may make a criminal behaviour order in respect of the person who is engaged in serious bullying.

The criminal behaviour order would contain requirements and prohibitions. There are caveats that the views of young offender teams will be sought and for persons who are 18 years or younger there would be a supervisory element. There will also be reviews every 12 months. However if the person fails to comply with the order they are liable to a fine or jail if brought back to court. We believe that so long as it was the intention of the amendment mover and therefore committee that all community remedies would be sought first before any serious punishment was invoked, that the measures could work.

Children and Families Bill

We believe that it is the view of the all-party group on bullying that a provision needs to be added to the above bill to address any special educational needs of severely bullied children. We have therefore made a number of recommendations as how we feel this could be addressed. We believe that all bullied children have special education needs or develop special needs as a result of being bullied. Children, for example those who may be exceptionally bright, those with disabilities may also be bullied and may develop severe depression. Others may be bullied on the grounds of race or religion and suffer psychological damage. Children who are assessed as having such special needs can access school action plans and appropriate interventions. We suggest therefore that the committee may wish to consider the following amendments to the 'Children and Families Bill' which would address the main concerns. These clauses are drafted following consideration of the rough draft which the committee has already produced.

After clause 20 New Clause…-Special educational needs of severely bullied children.

Risk Assessment

1) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State for Education to conduct a full risk assessment in respect of any child or young person who is referred on the grounds that they are being seriously bullied.

Childs Welfare

2) In assessing the needs of children or young persons in respect of serious bullying the welfare of the child or young person must be paramount.

Action Plan

3) The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government shall have responsibility for ensuring that a multi-agency action plan is prepared in respect of any child or young person who is the subject of serious bullying.

Duty to Implement

4) Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government must ensure that measures are put in place to enable strategic authorities to implement agreed action plans in respect of any child or young person who is being bullied.

Strategic Authorities

5) Strategic authorities may include - central government, local authorities, educational establishment, social media providers and health trusts or children's services.

Recording of Serious bullying

6) It should be the duty of the Department for Education and other relevant bodies to keep a record of instances of serious bullying in respect of any child or young person and that duty should extend to other relevant authorities.

Impact Measurement

7) It should be the duty of the Secretary of State for Education to measure the impact following the implementation of any action plan in respect of an individual or any young person or child. Those measures may include attendance to school, level and ability of the child or young person to concentrate, learning targets and the wellbeing of that child or young person.

Training

8) It shall be the duty of any relevant Secretary of State to ensure that all staff are trained on the consequences and causes of bullying and prevention strategies.

Family Support

9) It should be the duty of any local authority to provide family support and interventions in respect of any child or young person who is assessed as being seriously bullied.

Safe environment

10) There should be a duty on the Secretary of State for Education to ensure that all school governors should provide a safe school environment for children such that they are free from harm, intimidation or harassment.

New Criminal Offences

Serious Bullying

1) A court may pass a sentence on any individual who is convicted of serious bullying.
2) A person convicted under the sub-section above shall be liable for a prison sentence not exceeding 6 months or a fine which is less than a statutory maximum or both.
3) A court may pass a sentence following a conviction for serious bullying provided that it is satisfied that the offender has engaged in behaviour that causes alarm and distress to a person and the passing of the sentence will assist in preventing the offender in engaging in any further bullying behaviour.

Court Reports

4) A court shall prior to passing a sentence on an individual convicted of the offence of serious bullying obtain a report from a relevant authority.

Restorative Justice

5) Any relevant person commissioned by a court to produce a report in respect of a person committing bullying shall consider whether it is appropriate to recommend restorative justice interventions or any other community disposals.

Qualifications

6) A person deemed suitable to write a report in this section must be an appropriate qualified practitioner.

15th July
Adrienne Katz FRSA, Director, Bullying Intervention Group,
Submission to the APPG 24th February 2015

Our proposals emerge from our regular ongoing pupil surveys, revealing trends and youth behaviour patterns. Our research looks for evidence of effective strategies. Our survey reports are regularly shared with our members to enable them to improve practice. We currently hold data on over 11,000 young people in secondary schools and in The Cybersurvey we hold over 22,000 responses on cyberbullying and online lives.

Themes to take forward

Vulnerable groups

We have identified vulnerable groups for whom bullying is likely to be far more serious, prolonged and persistent. These include:

a) Young Carers

b) Young people in care

c) Those with mental health difficulties

d) Those experiencing loss

e) Those with special educational needs or disability

Loss of support services

There are fewer Educational Psychologists and other support services, higher thresholds for CAMHS in many locations and a general sense among schools that if they do want to intervene early there is little professional help available and they may struggle to locate services even for serious cases. In some situations if professional help is bought in, this may be limited to a fixed number of sessions per child rather than a focus on meeting the needs of that child.

Seamless targeting both on and offline

There is no longer any boundary between bullying face-to-face and online or via mobile or games console. Targeted individuals can expect to be sought out and targeted 24/7 in a multi-method attack. This takes place very often in front of an audience that the target must see and be alongside in school each day.

The implications of this are a need for Anti-Bullying and e-safety policies to be better integrated. Furthermore a modernised SRE and PSHE curriculum is required.

Bullying may lead to a greater vulnerability to other online risk

There is evidence from research and our own observation to suggest that victims of bullying may go online to seek friendship, love and intimacy, putting themselves at great risk of grooming. Alternatively they may go online to retaliate causing more complex cases to develop dangerously. Other risky behaviour noted among the vulnerable groups and targets of bullying include:

- Visiting gambling sites, sites with adult content, sites encouraging self-harm or suicide, sites promoting anorexia.

- Vulnerable children and young people report higher rates of personal details being stolen, social networks hacked, being sold fake goods, and being given advice which 'might be dangerous.'

- In a recent survey for Suffolk County Council's e-safer Suffolk team The Cybersurvey has identified young people who report much higher likelihoods of all the above than their peers and we are exploring the possibility that this could help identify people at risk of sharing self generated images, in order to set early intervention in motion. A screening tool is being developed using all the factors in the lives of a group of young people engaged in so called 'sexting'.

Resilience

There are strong signs of resilience in about a third of the young people surveyed. They are able to look after themselves online, stand up to injustice and often help others. In contrast to the vulnerable groups above they do not want much adult teaching on e-safety for example but would prefer to be shown how to problem-solve and where to go to find out for themselves how they can stay safe. There is a great deal of boredom in relation to e-safety and to counter this we are producing new materials and books due out later this year.

Racism

It is suggested that racism is proving stubborn. This is noted when we explore schools deemed 'effective' at dealing with bullying by students, compared to schools deemed 'ineffective'.

In effective schools, rates of prejudice-linked bullying dropped dramatically in contrast to the data from ineffective schools. Homophobic bullying and bullying aimed at people with SEN or long term illnesses drop markedly, except for racist bullying which drops only slightly. This may be as a result of the public discourse on immigration and a general rise across Europe of racism but it is a regrettable trend and we wish to bring it to your notice. This prejudice appears entrenched by the mid teenage years.

At this stage it is difficult to say whether racism is rising or whether it is resistant to attempts to reduce it. We will continue to monitor this.

While homophobic bullying responds very successfully to effective strategies, in those schools deemed ineffective by students, we see that it is not being successfully addressed and, perhaps in a 'push-back' against recent progress to grant equal rights, there are signs of resistance.

All these themes need to be addressed if we are to continue the successful anti-bullying work seen in this country since 1999. At the moment shortage of support services is the single most urgent issue. If we uncover a serious case say schools, we may struggle to refer this on.

All our reports can be made available and The Cybersurvey reports are all online. We can provide this material to substantiate our suggestions.

2014

10th March 2014
Alex Holmes, Diana Award
Preventing Bullying in School – the Ambassador programme

The Diana Award believes that every young person should be able to regard their school as a stable and non-threatening environment. The Anti-Bullying Ambassadors Programme (ABA) protects vulnerable children and young people from harmful effects of bullying by providing an intervention that has the backing of the whole school and is peer-led. Students, staff, and parents all gain the knowledge, confidence and expertise to tackle, prevent, and stand up to bullying.

Our approach is holistic and peer led, whereby Anti-Bullying Ambassadors are trained to lead campaigns to empower the student body to have mutual respect for each other and engage good anti-bullying practice. ABA covers all aspects of bullying from cyber, homophobic, racist, mental and physical bullying and equip children and young people with the tools to work alongside schools staff to tackle bullying. This means that the programme will remain relevant in times to come, as it is tailored to the needs of young people.

The ABA programme is built on:

• Enhancing young people's self-awareness around the issue of bullying behaviour, their ability to objectively reflect on their behaviour and how their actions impact on others

• Providing support to victims of bullying by building their confidence, self-esteem, resilience as well as supporting them with the skills to stand up to bullying

• Training and supporting teachers and other youth professionals on effective ways of dealing with and reducing bullying incidences in schools

Since 2010, we have trained and supported over 22,000 young people and 4,000 professionals in more than 4,000 schools in England to tackle bullying. The programme is embedded into these schools through our unique approach involving monthly whole school campaigns, which is also referenced in over 80 OFSTED reports as good practice, which aims to:

1) Protect vulnerable children and young people from the harmful effects of bullying with a particular focus on cyber-bullying and digital resilience.

2) Enhance children and young people's self-awareness around the issue of bullying behaviour, their ability to objectively reflect on their behaviour and how their actions impact on others.

3) Providing support to victims of bullying by building their confidence, self-esteem, resilience as well as supporting them and their families with the resources to stand up to bullying

4) Provide training and support for existing and newly trained teachers and Anti-Bullying Ambassadors to reduce bullying incidences in schools across England.

ABA adopts a more holistic approach to tackling all types of bullying and behaviour by empowering pupils and schools' staff. The programme helps pupils develop the skills and confidence to take charge of countering bullying in their schools using a peer-led programme to reflect and challenge bullying behaviour.

8th July 2014

Professor Louise Arseneault: Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College, London

Two papers

1. Impact of childhood bullying still evident after 40 years[8]

The negative social, physical and mental health effects of childhood bullying are still evident nearly 40 years later, according to new research by King's College London. The study is the first to look at the effects of bullying beyond early adulthood, and is published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry.*

 The findings come from the British National Child Development Study which includes data on all children born in England, Scotland and Wales during one week in 1958. The study published today includes 7,771 children whose parents provided information on their child's exposure to bullying when they were aged 7 and 11. The children were then followed up until the age of 50.

Dr Ryu Takizawa, lead author of the paper from the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London, says: "Our study shows that the effects of bullying are still visible nearly four decades later. The impact of bullying is persistent and pervasive, with health, social and economic consequences lasting well into adulthood."

Just over a quarter of children in the study (28%) had been bullied occasionally, and 15% bullied frequently – similar to rates in the UK today.

Individuals who were bullied in childhood were more likely to have poorer physical and psychological health and cognitive functioning at age 50. Individuals who were frequently bullied in childhood were at an increased risk of depression, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts.

Individuals who were bullied in childhood were also more likely to have lower educational levels, with men who were bullied more likely to be unemployed and earn less. Social relationships and well-being were also affected. Individuals who had been bullied were less likely to be in a relationship, to have good social support, and were more likely to report lower quality of life and life satisfaction.

Professor Louise Arseneault, senior author, also from the Institute of Psychiatry at King's adds: "We need to move away from any perception that bullying is just an inevitable part of growing-up. Teachers, parents and policy-makers should be aware that what happens in the school playground can have long-term repercussions for children. Programmes to stop bullying are extremely important, but we also need to focus our efforts on early intervention to prevent potential problems persisting into adolescence and adulthood."

Bullying is characterized by repeated hurtful actions by children of a similar age, where the victim finds it difficult to defend themselves. The harmful effect of bullying remained even when other factors including childhood IQ, emotional and behavioural problems, parents' socioeconomic status and low parental involvement, were taken into account.

Professor Arsenault adds: "40 years is a long time, so there will no doubt be additional experiences during the course of these young people's lives which may either protect them against the effects of bullying, or make things worse. Our next step is to investigate what these are."

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2. Victims of childhood bullying at higher risk of cardiovascular disease in later life

People who experienced bullying in childhood are more likely to be overweight and show higher levels of blood inflammation in later life, finds new research from the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London. This puts them at higher risk of heart attack and various age-related conditions, including type-2 diabetes, according to the study authors.

The findings are based on data from the British National Child Development Study (NCDS), a long-term study of all children born in England, Scotland and Wales during one week in 1958. The study, published today in *Psychological Medicine,* includes 7,102 children whose parents provided information on their child's exposure to bullying when they were aged 7 and 11. Measures of blood inflammation and obesity were obtained from information and samples collected when participants were aged 45.

Professor Louise Arseneault, senior author from the IoPPN at King's College London, said: 'Our research has already shown a link between childhood bullying and risk of mental health disorders in children, adolescents and adults, but this study is the first to widen the spectrum of adverse outcomes to include risks for cardiovascular disease at mid-life. Evidently, being bullied in childhood does get under your skin.'

Researchers found that 26 per cent of women who had been occasionally or frequently bullied in childhood were obese at the age of 45, compared to 19 per cent of those who had never been bullied. A second measure of abdominal fat was calculated by dividing waist measurements by hip size (waist-hip ratio). Both men and women who suffered childhood bullying showed greater waist-hip ratio at 45 years old than non-bullied participants. Findings remained significant when controlling for childhood risk factors including parental social class, participants' BMI and psychopathology and also key adult variables such as social class, smoking, diet and exercise.

Frequent bullying in childhood also led to higher levels of inflammation at mid-life in men and women. Researchers found that 20 per cent of those who had been frequently bullied, compared to 16 per cent of those who had never been bullied, had C-reactive protein (CRP) levels of more than 3mg/L. High CRP levels increase risk of heart disease by promoting atherosclerosis, a condition where arteries become clogged up by fatty substances. Those who were frequently bullied in childhood also had raised levels of fibrinogen, a protein which promotes the formation of blood clots.

Bullying is characterised by repeated hurtful actions by other children, where the victim finds it difficult to defend themselves. In the NCDS, 28 per cent of participants were bullied occasionally in childhood and 15 per cent were bullied frequently. These figures are consistent with prevalence rates of childhood bullying victimisation today.

Professor Louise Arseneault said: 'Bullying is a part of growing up for many children from all social groups. While many important school programmes focus on preventing bullying behaviours, we tend to neglect the victims and their suffering. Our study implies that early interventions in support of the bullied children could not only limit psychological distress but also reduce physical health problems in adulthood.'

Dr Andrea Danese, a co-author from the IoPPN at King's, said: 'Taking steps to tackle obesity and high blood inflammation is important because both can lead to serious and potentially life-threatening conditions, such as type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

'The effects of being bullied in childhood on the risk for developing poor health later in life are relatively small compared to other factors. However, because obesity and bullying are quite common these days, tackling these effects may have a real impact.'

He added: 'The main focus of prevention for age-related disease has traditionally been on unhealthy adult behaviours, such as smoking, physical inactivity, and poor diet. These are clearly important but our research highlights the need to trace the roots of these lifelong risk trajectories back to psychosocial experiences in childhood.'

11th July 2014:
Notes from parents of severely bullied children for Baroness Brinton

The following was taken from short, informal chats with parents on the final day of term 2014 at a Red Balloon Centre. Parents were asked to answer three questions. Answers are paraphrased below.

Kelly Hughes

What was your child's experience at their previous school?

It was difficult for him. He was bullied every day. Dragged. He had to have police protection when he was at his Nan's because there were children saying they were going to kill him. My son had to be locked up at lunchtime because they couldn't control the bullies to the point where he couldn't come to school.

How did this affect their attendance?

The bullying started in year 6 and he didn't make it through the first term of year 7. If it wasn't for RB I could have ended up in prison because he didn't go to school.

How has your child attending Red Balloon changed their attitude towards learning and coming to school?

It hasn't changed his attitude about going to school. But he is somewhere now where he can trust people. It's difficult for him to make friends. He is starting to talk out and not hold so much in.

Paula Gilbert

What was your child's experience at their previous school?

The school was too big and there was a lack of knowledge and understanding about the bullying and the autism and lack of communication.

How did this affect his attendance?

His attendance was poor. He was down to 62% attendance. It may have even gone lower.

How has your child attending Red Balloon changed their attitude towards learning and coming to school?

Just by people making the time to understand and communicate with us. The positive attitude also helps. There was lot of negative attitudes at the previous school. His confidence has improved. He socialises more and is happier.

Andrew Rowe

What was your child's experience at their previous school?

My son was bullied in primary school and then by the same children in secondary.

How did this affect their attendance?

He spent six or seven months in the inclusion unit. He didn't stop attending. I always held the view that education was everything so I was adamant he went to school. You are faced with the problem that the school don't want to admit there is a problem because the authorities.

How has your child attending Red Balloon changed their attitude towards learning and coming to school?

I don't get him up in the morning. I don't have to nag at him to get ready. We actually had the problem that he is getting too early. He is so much better since he came here. At the beginning there were problems but that was residual from his time at his school. He is a lot happier now. There isn't enough recognition of how damaging bullying is. They say bullied children become bullies and that is true because they need an outlet for their frustration.

Bill Marks

What was your child's experience at their previous school?

I sent him to (this school) because they had extra special learning facilities. It was a lot bigger than the school he had been before. I thought it would be better but then he had difficulties with major social interactions at playtime. So he stood out a bit and got bullied. We tried to knock it on the head but it kept coming back. There was an incident that a boy teased him about losing his mother. The school took that very seriously. There were ongoing incidents with two other boys. They were cruel – mainly with words.

How did this affect his attendance?

Every day I took him in it was harder to get him in. There were days he wouldn't go in at all.

How has your child attending Red Balloon changed his attitude towards learning and coming to school?

He has been through some hard times so having the therapy has helped. Also being in a small environment has helped. You can see what is going on more. It's calmer. He doesn't complain about coming. He is a bit tired as it's a long way to come. I think it has done him good and turned him around.

A letter from a parent

Dear Baroness Brinton

I'm writing to give you my experience with bullying in schools.

Most schools would say they have zero tolerance towards bullying and that they will not allow it to go on. With my experience it was **zero** that was done!

My son is very gentle, kind natured and loving boy. In January 2013 a group of boys (five boys all in Year Six and a year older than my son but in same class as it is mixed Year 5 and 6) started to give him a hard time. He reported this to the teacher and was praised for doing so and the teacher dealt with the bullies (I don't know how).

The inevitable happened and of course the bullies were furious that my son had "told" so the bullying got worse. He soon learned that if he "told" he'd get punched some more and truth of the matter was that "telling" the teacher would never result in punishing the boys, she'd simply 'have a word with them'!

I'd collect my son from school and see these boys push him down stairs, he'd stumble then another boy would push him against a wall while the other would punch him. For a mother to see this was devastating and heartbreaking, it made me so sad but also furious.

He was getting nowhere with telling the teacher and despite numerous letters, emails and meeting with the head teacher the situation was getting worse. More and more boys were uniting together to give him a hard time, they would congregate in the playground prior to school starting and plan how they'd attack him and mess him up mentally and physically. I bought this to the head's attention and it stopped for about three days!

My son decided he'd retaliate. One day I collected him and he'd been punched in the cheek and the stomach and also stabbed in his back with a pencil. In his anger and pain he had lashed out and punched the main boy. All the boys were punished by being made to miss lunch and break in the playground and made to do a day's work at the head's office. That is it! My son was punished along with the bullies and the head said he'd joined in despite it being self-defence.

I was worrying endlessly about him. I was still having meetings with the head teacher but to no avail. I hated taking him to school and worried all day. I'd feel anxious and sick. He would cry every morning but the school would make it very clear and tell me that I had a legal obligation to send him to school.

I felt like I was being bullied by the school. The head teacher actually said "Your son is asking for it!" and on one instance she said "Your son was punched because he moved away from his safe area!" I was furious as I thought all areas of school were meant to be safe!

One of the school secretary's sons even wrote on Instagram, "You're gay" I emailed it to the head teacher, but all she did was "have a word" with the parent and the boy.

I took my son on an anti bullying course run by Kidscape. He really didn't want to go but I knew he had to and insisted. Kidscape was brilliant, it had wonderful, kind people and they were very helpful to my son and me. They listened to my story and the reaction was why haven't you taken him out of the school? I felt bad I'd kept taking him every day, I thought I was doing the right thing sending him in as I kept being told that I had a legal obligation. Kidscape told me about Red Balloon. I made note of this and put it to the back of my mind as now my son had learned new skills from Kidscape surely he would no longer be bullied.

Kidscape taught my son to immediately tell a teacher in a very confident loud voice if anyone start to bully him so the bully would see he's was not scared of telling. The day after the course something went on and the head teacher was in my son's class so he said "Mrs Lewis can I speak to you please?"

Her reply in a very rude and abrupt voice was "not now I'm busy. See me at lunchtime!" My son didn't see her a lunchtime because he said she sounded angry so he didn't dare go. This took away any confidence he had gained at Kidscape and also reaffirmed that the bullies were still in control.

That afternoon he got hit around the head four times. The teacher just told the bully to sit down! He got head-butted, punched and non-stop verbal abuse about him and me.

As I collected him one of the bullies gave me the middle finger in front of the teacher and she just shrugged her shoulders! I am mortified I sent my son on a daily basis to be subject to all of this and I'm ashamed of myself. It's child abuse but I didn't think I had a choice.

After this there was no way I was sending him back so I contacted the education authority. After speaking to a lovely man who said they'd support my decision and someone would call me the next day I felt very confident and happy with my decision. I have not heard since from the education authority. I also wrote a letter to Dr Coulson who is the head of education. He contacted the head teacher but made no contact with me at all.

I wrote to Ofsted, they replied a month later saying they would not do anything!

Luckily I remembered Red Balloon, I rang and within the hour I had a teacher returned my call. I told her everything and she told me and to drive my son to Cambridge the next day to meet with her. I have never met a lady so kind, understanding and generous. It actually makes me so humble and grateful that I met her and it brings a tear to my eyes.

The teacher from Red Balloon told me what I needed to do and how to do it and enrolled my son on Red Balloon of the Air.

Without her I'm not to sure what would've happened because he said "I'd rather be dead than go back to that school."

The RBAir Coordinator who runs the online school sent a laptop in the post and arranged online lessons. One of the RBAir staff, the Regional Mentor telephoned me and we spoke about my son and how it's affected his usually kind, calm, happy self. He was now ratty, moody and would shout at me and lock himself in his room crying shouting out to me "you're the worse mum ever, I hate you!"

That's all stopped now. My son has lessons same as at school but with no fear of being abused verbally or physically. I don't think people realise bullying is so bad unless they're effected. It's really messed my son and me up financially and mentally. I have to pay for a child minder for him while I work and contribute a very small amount to Red Balloon, I wish I could pay more as the service, help, care and tutors are outstanding.

Without Red Balloon I'd be a mess, they took away all my worries and took over like guardian angels!

15th July 201
Janet, parent of a severely bullied child

This is a description of the bullying my daughter Caitlin experienced over a three-year period, Years 7, 8 and 9 at one particular school. In the short time I have I am unable to go into detail – but I think you will get the picture.

Caitlin was a bright, sensitive girl with a kind and caring nature. She was slim, tall, mature and sensible. She settled into Year 7 well, was very happy and said how much she was enjoying it. She travelled to school on the school bus.

By Christmas of her first year the bullying had begun. A group of Year 11 girls would laugh at Caitlin on the school bus and say, "Oh my God, what have you got in your hair? Look at her, what does she look like?" Then other children started to join in. They wouldn't let her sit down but would block a seat by putting their legs up which meant she often had to stand for the five miles home or perch on the end of a seat.

Following the school's advice to ignore people who bullied you, Caitlin did just that. But this seemed to make it worse, so I rang the school and left two messages. Each time I was told someone would ring me back. Nobody did.

Then it started happening in school too. This group of Year 11s would push her, block her way and chant her name. So I contacted the head of year directly for a meeting but she made it clear it was Caitlin who was the problem, that she had to change and learn to cope with it. I subsequently received an email from this teacher saying, "I have put a few things in place to support Caitlin *[to this day I do not know what they were]* and have spoken to the students who were causing her concern". The behaviour was not named as bullying and no sanctions were taken against the bullies.

And nothing improved. So I asked for another meeting. This time the excuse made for the bullying was that these girls were jealous of Caitlin, and that Caitlin needed to toughen up and ignore them. Still no mention was made of bullying, sanctions or apologies.

In fact things got worse. Caitlin regularly came home with chewing gum stuck in her hair or saliva on her clothes. As soon as the door was shut would burst into racking sobs. I sadly and slowly watched as her confidence drained away.

In Year 8 the bullying escalated. Caitlin now wore her hair up to stop people putting chewing gum in it. She was spat at and she would ask me to check her hair for gum or spit when she got home. She would have her bag taken and kicked around. Her computer was switched off in ICT lessons so she would lose all her work. On one occasion she rang me from the house of her friend, Sarah, to ask me to collect her. She was too upset and scared to walk home after what had happened on the bus. This then became a pattern, being scared to walk alone, so I would walk with her in the morning to the bus stop and pick her up in my car in the afternoon.

Girls told her daily that she was ugly and fat and would say, "I'm glad I'm not as ugly as you!" So she stopped eating at school because when she did eat they would say, "Are you eating again, you eat so much, no wonder you're so fat!" She now believed everything she was told and her self-esteem plummeted. She restricted herself to 400 calories a day, vomiting after eating a meal, self-harming by cutting her arms and legs, first with a knife and then with razor blades, to just help herself face each school day. When she tried to work in lessons the bullies called her a boffin.

 I emailed her new head of year to see if she could change classes and was told she could move seats within the class but she was to stay in the same set.

And so it went on. If children were picking a team in PE they would say, "Oh no, not you!"; and on other occasions children would say "Oh, why don't you just lie down and die?".

Despite all this Caitlin was always quietly optimistic and determined that things would get better and she tried hard to be heard and listened to. On one occasion she went to a senior teacher to tell him what the bullies were doing and to ask if he would speak to them. Instead he said, "Why do you care about what people say to you or about you?" and he did nothing.

By now the stress and anxiety was showing in her face and she avoided eye contact. When we went for a parents' evening, I was shocked to see how tense and scared she looked. By now even going into the school car park felt, as she described it, "like going into a war zone".

One concession was made; Caitlin was allowed to go to a room in for children who could not cope with being in class. Sadly, this offer came too late and did not work as she was by now traumatised.

The self-harming greatly lessened during the summer holidays but as soon as she was back in school she started cutting deeper almost daily and now was doing it in the girls' toilets. We had to go to the minor injuries at the hospital several times to get these deep cuts dressed and sometimes stitched.

Half way through her third year at this school things suddenly broke down completely. I received a call from school: would I please collect her. Caitlin got in the car and I drove off. After a little while she asked me to stop. I pulled over. She asked me if I would help her do something. I told that of course I would – anything.

She asked me if I would help her kill herself. She said she just couldn't take the terrible pain any more, that she had tried everything else and this was the only way she could think of to stop it.

I was desperate and at a total loss. Caitlin then became too scared to even leave the house. She never went back to mainstream school.

During these three years the school never acknowledged that Caitlin was bullied. Once she left they finally admitted it did go on and also acknowledged the effect it had had on her.

As a consequence of the sustained bullying Caitlin, my bright, sensitive girl with a kind and caring nature, now suffers from severe anxiety and panic attacks, has difficulty in coping with social situations, suffers severe depression and has post-traumatic stress disorder and agoraphobia.

Before this nightmare experience, I never realised how bullying could cause such trauma and pain, and make children mentally ill and suicidal. Caitlin did not have special needs - she was an ordinary, capable, confident student but the experience she had at the hands of the bullies and the school's inability and reluctance to accept this, has had a damaging effect on her life. She went from an ordinary Year 7 with a great future to a frightened, depressed girl who saw death as the only solution.

14th December 2015
Professor Chris Kyriacou, University of York
Dealing with Cyberbullying by pupils

Summary

Cyberbullying refers to the transmission by electronic means of demeaning, distressing, threatening and abusive messages and images which target a particular individual or a group of individuals. It is now a major problem and source of distress for many schoolchildren.

Cyberbullying can take various forms: messages, images, recordings; it can make use of closed networks such as Facebook or open networks such as YouTube; messages and images can be sent directly or indirectly to the victim and to the cyberbully's peer group, or simply posted anonymously on a site where the victim and others may come across it.

It differs from face-to-face bullying in a number of important respects. Anyone can become a victim (they may not even know each other). The size of the audience can be huge. The cyberbully has less inhibitions and less empathy for the victim, as they do not see the victim's distress face-to-face. The cyberbully does not have to be in a position of power over the victim. Once the material is posted, it can be read/seen repeatedly and re-distributed by others. It is also much harder for bystanders to berate the cyberbully or comfort the victim.

There is a range of different types of cyberbullies: the *social* (who is just having fun with their friends), the *narcissistic* (who enjoys the exercise of power), the *morally driven* (who envies the victim or wants to take revenge), the *loner* (who sees it as an interesting pastime); and the *sadistic* (who wants to cause pain).

Action that can be taken to reduce cyberbullying involving schoolchildren include:

• dealing with it in personal and social education lessons;

• promoting e-safety;

• dealing with specific cases appropriately;

• helping the cyberbully to understand that cyberbullying is unacceptable behaviour and helping them to devise other ways in which to deal with the reasons that promoted such behaviour

• involving peers, so that those who know about the cyberbullying can discourage the cyberbully and support the victim;

• developing electronic solutions through software that blocks certain types of messages/images being sent or received, and

• creating on-line educational material on anti-cyberbullying.

2016

18th July 2016
Dr Bob Sproson, Director of Education, Red Balloon Learner Centre Group
Notes to support presentation by Barry Sheerman MP

It is worth re-stating that students, and the families of those students, constantly seek help from a variety of agencies and providers because they find themselves in one of the following positions because they (the students) are experiencing mental health difficulties attached to school attendance following experience of e.g. bullying, bereavement, family breakdown:

- receiving inadequate provision e.g. work sent home and returned for marking;

- without provision whilst their parents seek to ensure evidence that they are 'safe' to return to school;

- engaging in 'home education' when the parents have neither the 'capacity' to provide education themselves or the financial wherewithal to purchase provision… that position has been reached not through 'parental preference', but to escape prosecution;

- completely without provision, often having been removed from a school role… approaches to the local authority for help result in insistence that the parent approaches the admissions department for a school place despite the acknowledgement that the child will not attend and, further, that, under such circumstance, no school is likely to admit.

Arguments have been put forward by the DfE that current legislation 'should' offer appropriate means of resolution. 'On the ground' experience does not, however, support this.

- there is no mechanism for ring fencing the budget for alternative provision – schools almost never identify a significant amount of money for this purpose that is 'set aside'… schools argue (with a degree of legitimacy) that all finances are committed to staff, accommodation and resources and nothing is 'left over' to fund 'unseen needs' e.g. for alternative provision for a student who unexpectedly ceases attending - most schools can predict which D2M (difficult to manage / potentially disruptive / abusive) students may require alternative provision, it is far more difficult to predict which students may encounter traumatic life experiences or suffer from mental health issues;

- where bullying has led to the 'need' for alternative provision, schools are often reluctant to acknowledge that – the law of unintended consequences in action – holding schools 'to account' for bullying can lead to them 'hiding' occurrences;

- schools use what resources they do have for alternative provision to ensure that students who disrupt the learning of others are provided for 'other than at school' –

they prioritise students who may be aggressive or argumentative over those who retreat into themselves;

- between LAs and schools there is often dispute as to who holds 'high needs' funding;

- schools have been very slow to recognise issues attached to the mental health of students and to acknowledge that students may require access to temporary 'education other than at school' as part of a coordinated approach to mental health issues... part of this recognition is the key understanding that school may be the cause of the condition;

- in dealing with non-attendance local authorities and schools revert far too quickly to a punitive response (threatened or actual prosecution) as opposed to a solution based approach;

- there is an easy 'opt out' for schools and local authorities, that being to 'suggest' to parents that they remove their child from the school roll and home educate them – the problem disappears for the school and the local authority but may be exacerbated for the student and family.

Evidence consistently points to the current system not being 'fit for purpose' in meeting the needs of this group of young people.

They fall between the various strands of statutory requirements; indeed there is often unhelpful confusion between those strands:

- Medical needs guidance to schools makes mention of mental health at the outset, but that is not expanded upon within the body of the advice... and school governors or heads would legitimately think their responsibilities were solely towards students with physical ill health.

- SEND legislation still utilises the 1981 Act definitions of special educational need i.e. "has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age; or has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools"...schools and authorities argue that 'refusal' to access the resources does not constitute a disability.

- Disability and discrimination (2010 Equality Act) statute insists that a disability has to be a long term condition, defining long term as greater than twelve months... a student who misses twelve months of education whilst waiting to come under this category is ill served.

- Mental health (updated guidance in 2015) describes only what should happen under circumstances where young people 'need' to be detained or restrained.

Furthermore the devolving of finances direct to schools has left LAs unable to meet their legal responsibilities adequately. It makes no sense to give LAs responsibilities e.g. to ensure as per the 1996 Education Act that all young people should access appropriate full time education and, "to make education otherwise than at school for those young persons who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them" or to ensure the wellbeing of all students, but not to provide them with the necessary finance to meet those responsibilities.

Thus we contend that the needs of these young people are not currently met, and will be best met through two routes:

1. Safeguarding,

2. Requirement that LAs hold responsibility as they do for LAC (looked after children),

Safeguarding

We contend that this group of students is at significant risk (of becoming NEET post 16, of experiencing increasing mental health difficulties, of entering adulthood without the means to provide adequately for themselves, and of significant self harm, in extremis, suicide). Therefore, as per the requirements of the recent updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education, schools, together with local authorities and other agencies must intervene at an early stage to prevent

escalation of the risks faced by the young person. "Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage." Furthermore the updated KCSiE requires that, "staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse... It should be clear as to how victims of peer on peer abuse will be supported. " Whilst schools can greatly reduce 'peer on peer' abuse, on occasion, supporting the victim requires alternative provision.

Local authority role

LAs are currently required to appoint a headteacher of a virtual school of LAC. That person must ensure that all LAC are known to the LA, and are appropriately educated .... s/he has funding to support that. We believe a similar role for self excluding students experiencing mental health difficulties is equally essential, and that the postholder must hold funding to enable her/him to access alternative provision as required.

17th October 2016
Sean Harford: Ofsted

Notes taken at the meeting

Sir Michael Wilshaw was unable to attend. Instead Sean Harford (HMI) addressed the question of what Ofsted inspectors can do to challenge poor behaviour and bullying of young people in schools, and what they cannot.

Sean focussed on three main areas in which inspection could have an impact: education, tracking & monitoring, and recovery.

Education

Inspectors can examine attendance data and attempt to analyse that data, particularly by finding out why particular children or groups have poor attendance. Similarly, questions are asked about exclusions. It is important that staff be trained to respond to instances of bullying. Inspectors will talk to children and to management about how bullying is dealt with, and to find out what the school does. There is bullying in every school. Schools must realise that it is not a weakness.

We can look at case files, ask about the referral process and judge its success by the outcome.

Tracking and Monitoring

Bullying will have an impact on achievement, especially in the case of vulnerable children. We can ask what the school is doing with the information they gather about achievement and underachievement.

What about children who are missing, are off-roll? What tends to happen is that if children miss more than about 20 days, monitoring ceases.

Recovery

This is the most difficult area to pick up on. If students cease to attend, how can they re-integrate? Good evidence can be obtained from questionnaires to parents/carers. On the other hand, schools are not obliged to ask parents to fill in questionnaires.

Parents/carers of poor attenders tend to disengage rather than make a complaint.

Local authorities are charged to keep a 'weather eye' on self-excluding children, but have no statutory right to inspect.

17th October 2016
Dr Niamh O'Brien: Anglia Ruskin University

The Study
This study focuses on the views of a small number of young people (n=4, Nikki, John, Andrew, Sam), who self-excluded from school as a result of bullying. Two parents also participated (Jessica, Nikki's mother and Jackie, John's mother). Semi-structured interviews and an online survey were used to collate data. The findings were presented to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Bullying in October 2016. This paper provides a summary of the key findings from the study.

Findings
This paper focuses on two key themes from the study:

- School support
- Life after exclusion

School support
After continuous repeated abuse, which was having an impact on their schooling and mental health, participants in this study made the decision to leave school. They agreed that their schools did not provide them with adequate support when they complained about being bullied. John, aged 14, was bullied by a group of girls who had sent him indecent images and called him late at night. He spoke about what happened when he told his head of year:

> *"...I had had a really bad day with the girls so I came out and I explained all this to my head of year and how it was affecting me but instead of supporting me he put me straight into isolation."*

Andrew, aged 15, was bullied as a result of mental health issues. He felt the outcome for him might have been different if he had received support at school "*Being offered help at the school would have been a start.*" He suggested that the school placed the onus on him as a victim of bullying to change:

> *"We tried to seek advice from the school I was at for months but they offered no advice and told us that if I didn't "make an effort" then I'd be kicked out, or I should just leave anyway."*

Sam, aged 15, said the bullying was "*cos I am different to everyone in my class*". Upon reflection about what could have been done to prevent self-exclusion, Sam said "*the teachers actually helping and listening would have been good but no one did listen.*"

Participants felt that their individual needs should have been catered for at school and the lack of compassion and understanding from teachers is a deterrent for young people reporting bullying:

> *"Schools need to be looking out for their student's mental wellbeing – not only be there to teach them but to support and mentor them. Keep them safe really...."*
> (Nikki)

Despite efforts to seek support in school, Nikki aged 16, was not offered any help with bullying. A physical fight broke out with eight young people supporting Nikki's bully:

> *"When I went to the school about it the students said I had attacked them – all eight of them! I just realised that no one believes me, nobody is there to help and support me so I really can't be there anymore. That was the last day I spent at school."*

In conceptualising and rationalising why teachers were not listening to her complaints of constant bullying, Nikki doubted whether her complaint was valid:

"I could understand them thinking I maybe got the wrong end of the stick with one incident but this was 18 months of me constantly reporting different incidents."

John had a similar experience:
"…it was an everyday thing I just couldn't take it and it was causing me a lot of anxiety."

Life after exclusion
Mental health

Although the participants experienced isolation and loneliness as a result of bullying, a sense of relief to no longer be at school was evident:

"I felt safe at home and didn't at school. It's comforting to be in a known environment away from those people." (Andrew)

Nikki however felt that the lack of support from school resulted in further isolation from her peers and she had no option but to remain at home:

"It got to the point where the bullying just go too bad. I had no friends I felt really isolated. The school wasn't doing anything and I didn't feel like I had anyone to support me…. The only support I had was at home so I felt I had no option but to stay at home."

Jessica reported that the bullying and not being at school had a huge impact on Nikki:

"She really did have a breakdown, rarely left her room…..It was very intense. She didn't leave the house at all for eight months. She was so broken. She did end up having a complete break down and she did attempt suicide."

Effects on the wider family

Jackie described the effect of John's self–exclusion on the wider family as "dreadful":

"As a mum to watch your son feel so depressed and so isolated it's absolutely heart-breaking."

In addition Jackie has felt ostracised from other parents as a result of withdrawing John from school:

"To be cast as somebody who goes out of the way to not work with the system is really frustrating. I lay in bed at night awake and he does the same."

Jessica spoke about the difficulties in receiving support for Nikki:

"It's so hard as a parent to watch your child go further and further down. It's so difficult because there is nowhere to turn to and we can't afford private counsellors and therapists. Every NHS thing has months to wait. It wasn't until she attempted suicide that she eventually got a CAMHS appointment."

Key points:
- Young people did not feel listened to when reporting bullying in school and felt the outcome might have been different if somebody at school supported them.
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation as a result of bullying were reported.
- The effects on the wider family are those of helplessness and frustration at not being able to resolve the bullying.

17th October 2016
Prof. Dieter Wolke: Department of Psychology, University of Warwick[9]

Bullying and its long-term consequences

1.   Definition

There is now a uniform definition of bullying accepted around the world [1]: In short, bullying is intentional harm doing that is repeatedly carried out against someone who is or feels weaker than the bully.

Bullying can be direct (e.g. hitting, blackmailing), indirect or relational (such as spreading malicious rumours) or using electronic means (cyberbullying).

2.   Who is involved in Bullying?

Bullies – who just bully and do not become victims

Victims – who are the target of the attacks

Bully/victims: -who bully but are also repeatedly victimized

3.   Misconceptions about bullying

"Bullies are thugs who just do not know better"

> *WRONG* – bullies are found in all social classes. They have been found to have good emotional and social understanding. However, they are callous and show little empathy for others. They are often highly strategic and ring leaders who are considered as "cool" and popular kids in the class. They are rarely found out as they use the bully/victims to do their dirty work.
> In contrast, bully/victims are often children from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds who have may have impulse control problems, low social competence and easily fly of the handle.

"Victims are kids who have something wrong with them"

> *WRONG* – there are false popular perceptions that victims have certain physical attributes (e.g. red hair, autistic), minority groups or those with psychiatric problems. Anyone can become a victim under certain conditions: being new, having no friends and in a highly hierarchical setting.
> Bullying is about power and dominance and access to resources (friends, money, romantic partners). Those who get bullied are those who are **competitors** in the popularity contest and may be socially or physically highly attractive rather than have anything wrong with them! Others are targeted as there is no risk involved that they will or can retaliate (e.g. those who with certain physical characteristics to easily pick on).

" Being bullied is a normal rite of passage and makes you stronger"

> *WRONG -* **Mental Health**: Being bullied (victims; bully/victims) has as or even worse effects on mental health lasting well beyond childhood into adulthood than being sexually or physically abused by adults [2]! The major mental health consequences are: highly increased risk of self-harm, attempted or completed suicide, depression and anxiety, eating disorders and psychosis.
> **Physical health:** being bullied increases inflammation and common physical disorders. Those who have been bullied more often smoke, drink and have disordered eating.

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[9] Reviews:
Wolke, D., & Lereya, S. T. (2015). Long-term effects of bullying. *Archives of Disease in Childhood, 100*(9), 879-885. doi:10.1136/archdischild-2014-306667
Wolke, D., Tippett, N., & Dantchev, S. (2015). Bullying in the family: sibling bullying. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 2*(10), 917-929. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(15)00262-X

Schooling: those bullied are often so frightened to go to school that they are truant or do not go to school at all.

Wealth: those who have been bullied in childhood find it harder to work in groups, more often resign from jobs without having another lined up and have more financial difficulties.

Social relationships. The loss of trust in peers affects social relationships with parents, peers and finding a romantic partner with stark consequences for wellbeing and life satisfaction.

"Bullying is highly costly for individuals and society"

Correct – there are high costs associated with bullying related to lost schooling, increased physical and mental health problems and service use and poorer wealth generation. The costs are so high due to the high prevalence of bullying victimisation (25% over 6 months; 10-12% are bullied over years) and thus the high number of people affected.

4.   Working towards reducing bullying - A No brainer[10]
- It affects all socio-economic and ethnic groups
- Is one of the highest concerns for children and their parents
- Reduction in bullying and its effects has a universal impact: on productivity and wellbeing and reduced costs

[10] References
1.   Gladden RM, Vivolo-Kantor AM, Hamburger ME, Lumpkin CD. Bullying Surveillance Among Youths: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0. . Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Department of Education; 2014.
2.   Lereya ST, Copeland WE, Costello EJ, Wolke D. Adult mental health consequences of peer bullying and maltreatment in childhood: two cohorts in two countries. *The Lancet Psychiatry.* 2015;2(6):524-531.