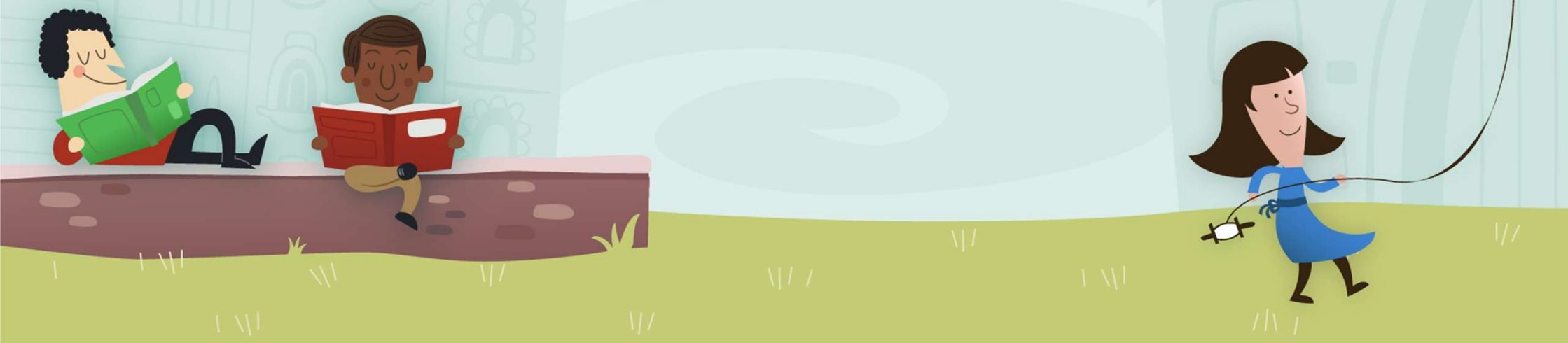


The Voice of the Child Conference November 27th 2023.



Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Partnerships held a Voice of the Child Conference focusing on Healthy Relationships and Bullying on the 27th November 2023 at the Rufus Centre, Flitwick. The aim of the conference was to hear the views from children and young people about these issues and how they can be better supported by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.



Eight schools attended with years 5, 6, 7 and 8 and a diverse mix of their students. Some of the children and young people had been directly impacted by the issues being discussed, and their feedback was crucial in shaping discussions on the day and actions following the event.

In preparation for the event the children were asked to discuss these topics with other students from their school and feedback their views at the conference so that the Safeguarding Children Partnerships could hear the views from as many children and young people as possible.



Speakers

Alfie (@shinealightwithalfie) presented his Anti Bullying & Mental Health Campaign. Alfie shared his own experience of bullying in Year 5 and has been campaigning for the last 2.5 years. His campaign has received support from a wide range of organisations & key people including; The Childrens Commissioner, Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Dr Alex Holmes OBE, Jack Grealish, Declan Rice, Luton Town footballers and many more! He recently created a documentary with CBBC regarding his campaign where he had the chance to discuss anti bullying with Jack Grealish and Declan Rice. Alfie is a Anti Bullying Ambassador for the Diana Award and at his school. His documentary is available on IPLAYER '[My Life -I was bullied](#)'

'My goal is to continue making a positive impact and put an end to bullying worldwide'. Alfie



CAMHS

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

4 young people from CAMHS attended to share their stories of being bullied and how they are addressing this through their Anti Bullying project.

Young people's messages:

- There is no one definition of bullying, it can take a lot of different forms and there can be a lot of different methods.
- A lot of the resources available for schools, parents and young people do not reflect this, they are outdated and sometimes unhelpful.
- The biggest piece of advice is to share it with a trusted adult.
- People bullying is a reflection of them, not of you



Here are some examples of what the children said about Bullying.

How does some being bullied feel?

- Unwanted
- Isolated
- helpless
- Sad
- closed off
- Worthless
- trapped
- Angry
- Left out
- Useless
- Neglected
- depressed
- alone
- embarrassed
- scared
- defenceless
- worried
- quiet
- anxious
- aware
- UNWORTHY
- suicidal
- aggressive
- silent
- selfharm
- selfharm
- emotional
- Unhygienic
- stressed
- annoyed
- sleepless nights
- uncomfortable
- disrespected
-

What would you do if you saw someone being bullied?

- Tell a teacher
- Interfere if needed
- Be understanding
- Hear both sides of the story
- Why did it happen?
- There are always 2 povs of the story
- See Peoples Point of view
- Keep it to your self (dont spread it)
- Treat Interfere but not in a way that will cause harm
- Tell an trusted adult
- Make sure you're not being one sided
- Pov
- Eyes and ears on the people



Why do people BULLY?

Physical appearance
 Skin color, height, is they are short, taking out anger, makes they are being bullied, there family background, Distinctive, Sad, out to be like, out to be like and the same, Pop, to be, used to that role model

Being Different
 Different, They, to be

Power
 Power, to be

Their Personality
 Personality, used to that role model

Their Role Model
 Role Model, used to that role model

Teasing
 Teasing, out to be like and the same

Playful
 Playful, Their age

Work
 Work, Their age

Humor
 Humor, Their age

Selfish
 Selfish, people who are selfish or people might feel sad when they see them

Tolerance/Intolerance
 Tolerance/Intolerance, people who are tolerant or people might feel sad when they see them

Jealousy
 Jealousy, They might feel sad when they see them

What's happening at home
 What's happening at home, higher priority, older, To fit in, Envy

Fun
 Fun, aggressive, negativity, sting, feel

Opinion
 Opinion, To make them feel better, show off

Anger
 Anger, show off

Purpose
 Purpose, forced to people

Their background
 Their background, aggressive, negativity

Due to background
 Due to background, Take out anger

Why do people bully?

- to make others feel bad
- because people are insecure
- letting out their anger
- They think it's fun
- They get enjoyment out of it
- They think that they're superior
- because they have experienced it themselves
- To be popular
- because they are popular
- because they are jealous

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- quiet
- anxious
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- UNWORTHY
- suicidal
- aggressive
- silent
- self-hatred
- self-harm
- emotional
- unhygienic
- stressed
- annoyed
- sleepless nights
- uncomfortable
- disrespected
-



Here are some examples of what the children said about Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships.

What do we need from relationships

support
people caring about you
Someone to guide you
Love
kind
no violence
nice words
Listen
Understand boundaries
Know you can go to them
trust
affection
body language

* Respectful during arguments/disagreements
* Respecting boundaries
* Loyalty * Equality
* Good communication =
* Not forcing friends to do things they don't want to
* Forgiving & moving forward
* Time apart
* Comfortable & open to other people.



HEALTHY ZIGZAG EXERCISE

Healthy Behaviours

- * moving on from negative arguments
- * Respecting boundaries
- * Giving gifts - showing you love & care
- * Trust
- * Listening & communicating
- * Giving a compliment that you mean
- * Honesty
- * Supporting others' decisions
- * Getting to know someone slowly - building friendship slowly & respectfully not asking questions too quickly.

Unhealthy Behaviours

- * Gaslighting
- * Using weaknesses against them
- * Toxic (Pretending)
- * Ignoring someone
- * Breaking a promise (that does not need to be broken)
- * Blackmail
- * Controlling
- * Child on child abuse

Staff:

- * Violent / aggressive
- * Negative social media

Healthy

- Sharing
- Understanding
- Listening
- Being present
- Supportive
- Honest
- A critical friend
- Reliable

Unhealthy

- Violent / aggressive
- Controlling
- Manipulative
- Verbal abuse
- Demanding
- Mistrustful
- Disrespectful
- Undermining



Red Light (Risky Friend):

- Your friend is doing something you now is risky and wants you to lie to parents/teachers to cover for them.
- Your friend sends you messages making fun of a group of kids at school.
- Your friend pressures you to send mean messages to someone on an app.
- Your friend criticises you or people you care about.
- Your friend threatens to hurt you.
- You say that you agree with your friend, even though you really don't. You are afraid that they won't be your friend anymore if you disagree.
- You are afraid of your friend when they get angry.
- You and your friend have an argument on a messaging app. In person you still are nice to each other because you are in the same group of friends and don't want to cause a bigger argument. When you go home you both send the person you like says they won't go out with you unless they go through your phone regularly.
- You start talking to someone online and like them as more than a friend.
- Your friend makes fun of you on their snapchat story but when in person tells you it was just a joke.

Yellow Light (Warning Friend):

- Your friend is doing things that you think are risky and wants you to do this with them.
- Your friend tells you not to hang out with certain people.
- You are nervous that if you tell your friend something personal, they will tell other people at school.

Green Light (Good Friend):

- Your friend talks to you about their feelings.
- Your friend is happy when good things happen to you.
- You get a boyfriend or girlfriend and your friend teases you.
- Your friend doesn't agree with you on something, but doesn't argue with you because they respect your opinion.
- You usually feel happy when you are with this person.
- You enjoy being with this person, but you also enjoy spending time with other friends.
- Your friend is upset, you go round their house and eat chips and watch TV.



Jeevan, a Young Healthwatch volunteer wrote about his attendance at the Voice of the Children Conference.

Attending the Voice of the Child Conference was an enjoyable and eye-opening experience; evidently, focusing on providing children the courage to speak up and stand up to bullying and unhealthy relationships. As someone interested in pursuing a career in Paediatrics, gaining an insight in how children's services want to empower and allow young people to have a voice in how they're supported, gave me exposure to a vast array of paediatric services and support programmes.

The conference consisted of students, from many different schools, and different ages. Facilitators sat with the pupils and discussed the various topics presented, and many staff members representing various children's services, including NSPCC and CAMHS. The primary topics discussed were regarding bullying and, how to differentiate and identify, healthy and unhealthy relationships. I was able to work with one of the facilitators who managed Bedford and Luton & Dunstable Hospital paediatric services. We assisted with various activities from categorising if a scenario belonged to a healthy or unhealthy relationship, to questions like, 'what would you if you saw someone was bullied'? Students wrote down and verbally gave their feedback regarding the topics; furthermore, all the various stations of: NSPCC, CAMHS, Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and the Police, gave a wealth of information on the support that young people can access.

Overall, the conference was successful in providing young people a voice that they knew would be heard. Also, the conference empowered all the students to understand that their opinion matters and there would be action based on their discussions and ideas.



Comments from young people from Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

What would you do if you saw someone being bullied?

I would step in and if it was a child I would tell the bully to stop and report to supervisor. Get a teacher and talk to them after. Remove the person from the situation and remember names etc if need to report. Ask the person a question that would distract them and get them out of the situation. Take them to a safe space and give them support. I would try and intervene if verbal argument but get a teacher or adult if physical as safer option. Try not to draw attention to the situation as it may make it worse.

Healthy Relationship

Being Open - Not judgmental – Listening - Making time for each other - Complementing each other - Respecting each other - Being happy for achievements - Asking how you are.

Unhealthy Relationship

Praying on each other's downfalls – Jealous – Distant - Overprotective - Don't want them to grow – Dishonesty – Uncommunicative - Not respecting both physical and mental boundaries - Being prejudice, mean or judgemental - Not interested in wellbeing.

What do you need from relationships?

Support and upbuilding - Happy for achievements - Checking in on someone and asking them twice – Love – Affection – Respect - Support - Honesty - Openness – Empathy - Active listening - Feeling like a priority - Both people putting in the effort – Boundaries - Some sort of happiness and excitement - Being supportive to allow for open ended conversations - Equality – Inclusive - Understanding of others feelings – Not praying on each others downfalls - Respecting boundaries, e.g. on physical touch and personal space and treat people how you want to be treated.



What will the Safeguarding Children Partnerships do in response to the Voice of the Child Conference?

They will assure themselves that all local schools and colleges are meeting their key statutory safeguarding obligations in protecting and keeping safe children and young people by working with the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education group to support the three Local Authorities in their annual S157/175 audit of these statutory obligations. To include the following

- Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues are more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children.
- Schools/college staff, their Governing bodies and proprietors need to know and should be aware of systems within their establishments which support safeguarding, and these should be explained to them as part of their induction. This should include a behaviour policy (which should include measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- Schools/colleges should have a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school/college life. There should be planned programme of evidence based RSHE which is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities).
- Will raise awareness of the Government's [Guidance for schools on preventing and responding to bullying.](#)



Local Resources

Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum are to create a bullying taskforce, with the goal of reducing the numbers of children with SEND who are experiencing bullying. SEND young people have discussed how bullying makes them feel, designed anti bullying posters and co-produced a workbook for adults with top tips on how they can support young people. [The answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about bullying](#) and [Bedford Borough against Bullying - Guidelines for Good Practice](#). Bedford Borough Council has advice and information on healthy relationships at this [link](#).

Central Bedfordshire has resources for children and young people with SEND on bullying via [Emotional Health and Wellbeing Support for Children and Young People | Central Bedfordshire SEND Local Offer](#). There are resources in their [SEND Local Offer Booklet](#), co-produced with parent/carers. Hard copies available in Children's Centres, Early Years settings, majority of schools, libraries, etc. Central Bedfordshire Council have information/advice on healthy relationships at this [link](#).

Luton's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Information and Advice Service have advice and info on bullying. [Luton Family Partnership Service](#) can offer advice and support. [Luton Sexual Health](#) has info and advice on relationships



Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Healthier Together website has advice on bullying.

[Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership](#) has advice and support for young people & unhealthy relationships [Sorted](#) counselling service offers the [Fortis](#) project for young people who have experienced domestic abuse call 01582 674442.

[Young Central Bedfordshire](#) offers information including support services.

[Luton Tokko Youth Space](#) a charity supporting young people aged 13-19 (up to 24 with SEN or a disability) to advance in life, feel safe and bring a reality to their imaginative ideas.

[Bedford Open Door](#) is a counselling service that supports young people 13-25 who live in the North of Central Bedfordshire 01234 360388

National Resources

[Family Lives](#) - [Kidscape](#) - [Anti-bullying Alliance](#) - [Childline](#) or children and young people can telephone on 0800 1111- [BullyingUK](#) - [NSPCC](#) - [Childnet international](#) - [Mencap](#) - [Preventing and Tackling Bullying - Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies](#) - [Anti bullying campaign booklet for Parents, Carers and School Staff \(PDF\)](#) - [National Domestic Abuse - Karma Nirvana](#)
[Anti bullying campaign leaflet for Students \(PDF\)](#) [LGBT+](#)

