ANTI BULLYING POLICY- CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. **Statement of Intent** 
   1. Omega Care Group recognises the negative impact of bullying on children. The organisation recognises bullying to be a safeguarding issue and operates a pro-active approach to create an open, inclusive, and mutually respectful home environment.
   2. Omega Care Group maintains a **zero**-tolerance stance, in regard, to any form of bullying in any context and has an absolute commitment to addressing all such incidents and behaviours as they may arise.
   3. Anti-Bullying policy is for the purpose of children and young people looked after or are known to Omega Care Group.
   4. Omega Care Group is committed to upholding Children Regulation 2015 and working towards the 9 quality standards. As per the Protection of Children Standard, this policy sets out operational guidance in preventing and stopping bullying to allow all children to live in a positive environment where they can flourish. This is applicable to the Children Residential Services.
   5. As an organisation we believe all children and young people have the right to live, thrive and develop their self-identity within an environment which promotes growth.
   6. This policy will outline the right of each child to feel emotionally and physically safe within their home environment.
   7. Omega Care Group believes that bullying is a behaviour choice and that anyone can be encouraged to change their behaviour positively.
   8. Omega Care Group recognises that bullying can be peer/peer, staff to child/ young person, child/young person to staff or staff to staff.
   9. As an organisation we recognise that bullying, particularly persistent bullying, has the potential for a long-term negative impact on the individual’s mental wellbeing and sense of self-worth.
2. **This Policy links to:**
   * + Omega Care Group Diversity and Equalities policy
     + Omega Care Group Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
     + Omega Care Group Digital and E-Safety Policy
     + Omega Care Group Data Protection Policy
3. **Terms of Reference**
   1. Throughout this policy the term “child” will refer to children and young people.
   2. There is no legal definition of bullying. Omega Care Group uses the definition developed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance:

*“****the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. This can happen face to face or online”***

* 1. As bullying is rooted in an imbalance of power, it can be difficult for those who experience bullying to defend themselves.
  2. Bullying may be seen or felt physically, online or psychologically, and includes social isolation and intimidation as well as acts or threats of violence.

1. **Omega Care Group will:**
   1. Operate robust recording and reporting processes.
   2. Ensure staff understanding of the Anti-Bullying Policy and of its implementation.
   3. To ensure staff complete training and hold knowledge and awareness into effective safe working practices to prevent and overcome bullying.
   4. To support a culture that aids a positive mediation and conflict resolution.
   5. Operate effective safe working Practices, including appropriate reviews of young people’s Risk Assessments.
   6. Ensure positive opportunities for children and young people to share and disclose with staff if they experience bullying.
   7. Omega will support the creation of an inclusive, anti-oppressive culture within the home. This should recognise and accept each child as a unique individual and value difference, tolerance and understanding.
   8. Ensure all staff are trained to respond and report effectively.
   9. Liaise with all appropriate professionals and maintain accurate records.
   10. Deal immediately with any identified or disclosed issues of bullying.
   11. Promote young people’s resilience and strategies for dealing with issues of bullying.
   12. Signpost and support access to external help where appropriate.
2. **Presentation of bullying**

* Bullying can take place by any form of verbal or non-verbal commination which includes face to face contact, emails, text messages, social media post, letters, phone calls, symbols, and hand gestures.
* Behaviour of bullying can include spreading malicious rumours, unfair treatment, picking on or regularly undermining someone, denying someone’s opportunities

1. **Forms of bullying**
   1. Cyber Bullying: The use of electronic communication including e-mail, photographs/video, websites, social networks, instant messaging etc. with the intention to cause distress, fear or to harass.
   2. Disability: Bullying can take place through negatively focussing on an issue relating to a disability within a derogatory and discriminative manner.
   3. Emotional: Tormenting, excluding, manipulating friendships.
   4. Homophobic: Negative behaviour targeted at an individual because of or focussed on issues of sexuality.
   5. Physical: Any use of violence where it is inflicted on an individual.
   6. Racial: Negative behaviour targeted at an individual because of or focussed on issues of ethnicity.
   7. Religious/Cultural:Negative behaviour targeted at an individual because of or focussed on issues of concerning their belief or culture.
   8. Sexual**:** Negative behaviour targeted at an individual because of or focussed on issues of sexually abusive taunts, comments or actions.
   9. Transphobic: Because of or focussed around issues of gender identity.
   10. Verbal: Rumour: spreading, name calling etc.

Bullying is often motived by prejudice; it may be motivated by actual difference or by perceived difference.

This Policy is informed by the Equality Act 2010; under this Act it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of any of the nine protected characteristics.

1. **Bullying and the law**
   1. Bullying is not specifically a crime in the UK, however harassment is when it is related to one of the following:
      * age
      * sex
      * disability
      * gender reassignment
      * marriage and civil partnership
      * pregnancy and maternity
      * race
      * religion or belief
      * sexual orientation
   2. Harassment is illegal under the following laws:
      1. Protection from Harassment Act 1997
      2. Malicious Communication Act 1998
      3. Communications Act 2003
      4. Criminal justice & Public Order Act 1994
      5. Defamation act 2013
2. Additionally, **some** forms of bullying are illegal, these include:
   1. Violence/assault
   2. Theft
   3. Harassment or intimidation over a period (single events do not qualify as harassment), including phone calls, e-mails and text messages.
   4. Anything involving hate crime.
3. **Hate Crime**
   1. This is defined as an occurrence which is perceived by the victim, or any individual to be:

* Racist
* Homophobic
* transphobic (discrimination against a transsexual or transgender individual)
* Discriminative to the individual’s religion or beliefs
* Discriminative to the individual’s sexual orientation, marital status or gender identity
* Discriminative to the individual’s disability.

Children and Young people should be encouraged and supported to report all hate crimes to the Police, as these are recorded whether a crime or not.

1. **Hate Incident**

Any incident which may or may not be a crime, which the victim or any other person perceives to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards any aspect of the person’s identity.

1. **Procedures**
   1. Omega Care will respond to incidents of bullying in a clear and consistent manner by:
      * ensuring the safety of the victim
      * taking action immediately in an effort to stop the bullying and addressing the behaviour of the person who bullies, and changing it where possible
      * making clear that all bullying is unacceptable and that there are potential consequences
      * learning from the incident, and further develop anti-bullying strategies.
      * Omega may hold pre-disruptions meetings in cases where the bully is a child in the home
      * Omega will utilise relevant agencies to support young people who participate in bullying behaviours to recognise the consequence of their actions and support them in identifying new positive behaviours.
      * Restorative mediation where both parties are in agreement.
2. **Reporting**
   1. If a member of staff identifies bullying or there is a disclosure of bullying they should:
   2. Take action with a view to stop the bullying.
   3. Commence investigation into the incident.
   4. Contact the unit manager to inform them of situation.
   5. Talk to the child who has been bullied: Use effective listening skills, offer time and space to talk, believe them and ensure that they feel safe.
   6. Agree an action plan with the child’s consent.
   7. Record all information in full on an Incident form, using child friendly wording.
   8. Take care not to humiliate or further impact on the victim.
   9. Talk to the child responsible for the bullying-recognise that in most cases there is not the intention to cause serious harm.
   10. Consider the child’s motivating factors, and whether there may be any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator.
   11. Clarify and record responses in the childs’s own words.
   12. Clarify the unacceptability of any form of bullying.
   13. Deter from repetition of the incident.
   14. Collate all information on Incident Form.
   15. Send a copy of the Incident Form to the relevant social workers and to the Omega Care Designated Safeguarding Officer.
   16. Revise the Risk Management Plans of all children involved in the incident.
   17. Review weekly as per Risk Management process, or if another incident takes place.
3. **Key Work (Children Residential) and Development sessions (16 plus) Sessions**
   1. If the issue can be addressed through the process of mediation, Key Worker sessions should be used to explore motivation, tolerance and understanding on the part of the perpetrator and promote resilience, assertiveness and empowering management strategies for the person who has experienced bullying.

Questions to be addressed include:

1. Does the victim feel safe?
2. Has the perpetrator’s behaviour changed?
3. What have we learnt as an organisation?
4. **Incidents of Serious Bullying**
   1. This involves specific major incidents involving serious physical and/or sexual assault.
   2. There then follows a process of escalation with immediate communication with the unit manager, the Designated Safeguarding Officer and social work staff. Accurate records which address all aspects of the incident **must** be maintained.
   3. It may be necessary and appropriate for the police to be involved in any incident where a serious physical assault has taken place. Children/Young people and staff **must** be informed of their right to take their complaint to the police, and it should be made clear to them that they will be supported throughout the process.
   4. Bullying becomes a child protection issue when:
      1. “there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer, significant harm”.
      2. This would include, for example, instances of sexual assault. Safeguarding procedures should be followed as per the Policy, and social care, the Safeguarding Officer and LADO informed.
5. If an incident results in a child being charged with physical or sexual assault the organisation will, through the Director, ensure the safety and wellbeing of all young people resident and implement alternative accommodation measures from the view of safeguarding all.
6. If, through circumstances, this cannot happen immediately, additional staff and an effective Risk Management process will be put in place and monitored effectively.

**Support and Information:**

Childline [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) 0800 11 11

Anti-Bullying Alliance [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

Stonewall (homophobic bullying) [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk) 0800 50 20 20

Kidscape [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)