

Big Voice London's Anti-Bullying procedure

Purpose and aim of this procedure

1. This procedure is supported by the "Big Voice London Anti-Bullying policy." Its aim is to provide detailed guidance to volunteers, as well as young people who may experience bullying, so that they will know what to do if an incident of bullying occurs between young people.
2. The procedure also aims to ensure that Big Voice London responds fairly and consistently to incidents of bullying, recognising that those who bully often have needs too.
3. This procedure applies to all young people who attend Big Voice London who may be bullied, behave in a bullying way towards others or observe someone being bullied.
4. It also applies to all volunteers who observe bullying between young people within Big Voice London, who may have incidents of bullying reported to them or who may be concerned that a young person at Big Voice London is showing signs of being bullied.
5. If an adult is bullying a young person, this should be reported under the child protection procedures.
6. If a young person is bullying another young person to the extent that it may cause significant harm, then it will also need to be dealt with under child protection procedures.
7. This procedure does not cover incidents of bullying among Board Members and volunteers. The "BVL Grievance Procedure for Volunteers" should be used for this purpose.

Forms bullying might take

8. Safe from bullying in youth activities (by the Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009) defines bullying as, "behaviour, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally.

One person or a group can bully others.”

It can include:

- verbal teasing or making fun of someone
- excluding young people from games and conversations
- pressurising other young people not to be friends with the person who is being bullied
- spreading hurtful rumours or passing around inappropriate photographs/images/drawings
- cyber bullying (i.e. using computers or mobile phones to bully someone)
- shouting at or verbally abusing someone
- stealing or damaging someone’s possessions
- making threats
- forcing someone to do something embarrassing, harmful or dangerous
- harassment on the basis of race, gender, sexuality or disability
- physical or sexual assault (although all sexual incidents and all but very minor physical incidents constitute abuse and must be dealt with in accordance with child protection procedures).

9. People are often bullied because they appear different from others.

The signs and symptoms of bullying

10. If someone is being bullied, they might not tell anyone directly. This could be because they have been threatened and are afraid to say anything or because they believe that nothing can be done about it and that telling someone will only make it worse. It could even be because they don’t recognise that what is happening to them is bullying.

11. Signs that someone may be being bullied could include:

- being unhappy, withdrawn and unwilling to spend time in a group, especially during unstructured periods e.g. break time
- being without friends

- missing meetings and activities at Big Voice London and/or expressing a reluctance to attend
- being clingy with adults
- appearing to lose possessions or money (things that may have really been stolen by or given away to bullies)
- unexplained injuries
- uncharacteristic illness or aggression

12. Some of these signs might also indicate abuse at the hands of adults or other negative experiences, so they should be treated with caution. (See also BVL Child Protection Policy and Procedure).

What to do if you are being bullied

13. If you are being bullied you should never keep it to yourself. Tell someone you trust. This could be your group co-ordinator/leader or another helper at Big Voice London or the designated safeguarding officer who is currently Victoria Anderson. It could also be your parent or carer or teacher.
14. You may prefer to tell another young person first and ask that person to help you tell an adult.
15. If the bullying is happening at Big Voice London we will sort it out here. If it's happening somewhere else (at school, for example, or near your home), we will get other people involved to stop it happening there.

What to do if you observe a young person being bullied or if someone tells you he/she is being bullied

16. **If you are a young person** and someone tells you that he or she is being bullied, don't try to deal with it yourself. Talk to the person about getting help from an adult. Try to persuade him or her to go with you to explain the situation to their group co-ordinator/leader or another helper at Big Voice London. If he/she won't do this, the best way to help is to explain that you will have to tell an adult yourself -- and then go ahead and tell someone.

17. **If you are an adult** and a young person tells you that he or she is being bullied, take the young person seriously. Do not tell him/her to stop being silly or to keep out of the way of the bullies. This will not help and will make the child feel let down and less inclined to tell anyone else. Listen to the child's full account of what is going on and complete the bullying reporting form with the young person as soon as possible.
18. If you observe the bullying directly, act assertively to put a stop to it. Explain to all concerned that the incident will have to be reported properly to stop it happening again. Report the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
19. Unless the incident is minor and can be dealt with informally, the young person's parent or carer should be informed within **one working day**.
20. If possible, there should be a three-way meeting between the young person, the group co-ordinator/leader and the parent.
21. If the bullying is taking place in another environment (e.g. school) refer the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Officer who will discuss the matter with the Safeguarding Lead Board Member.
22. If the bullying is taking place within Big Voice London, the parent and child should be reassured that it will be dealt with as a priority and should be asked for their views on what would be helpful to deal with the situation.
23. The group co coordinator/leader, having spoken to the young person who has been bullied and the young person's parent/carers, should also speak to the bully (or bullies) and obtain their account of what has happened or is happening. This should be noted in writing and the parents/carers of the bully (or bullies) should be informed. The bully and his or her parents/carers should be asked for their views on what should be done to put a stop to any further bullying and to repair the damage that has been done.
24. Apart from very minor incidents that have been directly observed by a volunteer and dealt with at the time, all bullying that takes place at Big Voice London should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Officer within **five working days**.
25. At the meeting, the bullying incident should be discussed and the details of a draft plan drawn up to address the situation, taking into account any suggestions made by the young people involved and their parents/carers.
26. The following areas should be covered:

- details of any apology that has been or should be offered by the bully (or bullies)
 - details of any support for the person who has been bullied e.g. use of buddy scheme, extra input from BVL volunteers, referral to another service
 - details of any consequences for the bully, in addition to making an apology, with reference to the “BVL Student Code of Conduct” and “Procedure for alleged breaches of the Student Code of Conduct.”
 - details of any support for the bully, with reference to the “BVL Student Code of Conduct” and “Procedure for alleged breaches of the Student Code of Conduct.”
 - details of any further discussions or work to be done with others in the group, including young people who may have observed or encouraged the bullying
 - details of any changes in how the group co-coordinators/volunteers may handle issues of bullying in future.
21. The plan should be shared with the young people concerned and their parents and should be reviewed regularly.

Keeping a record of the bullying

22. Use the bullying reporting form and take clear notes of any discussions or meetings that take place following the bullying incident. The plan for dealing with the aftermath of the incident should be copied to the young person who has been bullied and his/her parent/carer and to the bullies and their parents/carers. It should also be placed on the file of all the children directly involved.

Monitoring and review

The Management Board in conjunction with the Big Voice London Policy Sub Committee shall be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this procedure.

This procedure will be reviewed every two years. The next review is due to take place on or shortly after: **19 March 2020.**

