Resources for Anti-Bullying Week 2014 (17th-23rd November)

Introduction
Having resources to combat bullying is increasingly important in a range of community contexts: schools, community projects and organisations, workplaces and churches. Relationships can go wrong anywhere. What is important is raising awareness of such issues and implementing strategies to overcome the negative behaviour and its effects.

This year
Action Work Anti-Bullying month is from 3rd to 28th November 2014
Anti-Bullying week is 17th to 21st November 2014 (their theme is Cyber Bullying and Special Educational Needs).

The resources presented here could be used by churches, schools or projects for Anti-Bullying Week or at another time. The material is of several different kinds:
- Background material about bullying and anti-bullying;
- Stories about experiences of bullying;
- Views of young people and parents from a study carried out in Yorkshire;
- Suggestions for activities and actions connected with anti-bullying;
- Some material for worship including using the bible and prayers on this theme.

There is enough material here for several sessions including discussion groups, or for worship, for church magazines or websites. The resources complement but do not replace other material available from Anti-Bullying Websites or organisations.

1. Background material about bullying and anti-bullying

What is bullying?
Bullying can mean many different things. The following things have been described as bullying by some young people:
- being called names
- being put down or humiliated
- being teased
- being pushed or pulled about
- having money and other possessions taken or messed about with
- having rumours spread about you
- being ignored and left out
- being hit, kicked or physically hurt
being threatened or intimidated
These things can happen at school or at home, but they can also happen online or on social networks. Bullying can also be part of other forms of abuse, including neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

This definition of bullying is from www.childline.org.uk

What is anti-bullying?
Anti-bullying is any action taken to combat bullying. It may be by one person or a group of people. It may be in one place or on the internet, for example. There are a lot of people and organisations committed to work against bullying.

Where does bullying happen?
Anywhere and everywhere: in families, workplaces, schools, communities and in all walks of life from the Houses of Parliament to the care home. It can happen in churches or church may be the place in which people can feel empowered to deal with the way in which bullying has affected their life.

Where does anti-bullying happen and how?
Anti-bullying initiatives are more common in schools and are also promoted by some Trade Unions. However, many more places and people need to recognise the importance of anti-bullying strategies if we are really to create places where bullying cannot thrive and people of all ages and abilities can live in peace, free from bullying.

Statistics
A survey by four national charities at the beginning of 2014 found that bullying was the main stated cause of self-harm amongst young people:

REASONS FOR SELF-HARMING

- Bullying (25%)
- Family relationships (17%)
- Pressure to do well at school (14%)
- Emotional abuse (11%)
- Friendships (11%)

Source: Survey findings

The online poll, carried out by four self-harm support groups (Self-harm.co.uk, Child Line, Youth Net and Young Minds), also found most youngsters were feeling alone when they first self-harmed. Nearly 4,000 under-25s who have self-harmed responded to the survey.

A report about the causes of self-harm can be found here: http://www.cellogroup.com/pdfs/talking_self_harm.pdf
There are many types of bullying and cyber bullying has been rising in recent years: at least half of all young people have reported receiving threats and bullying on line or by mobile phone.

**Being an anti-bullying champion**

An anti-bullying champion is someone who is ready to stand up against bullying and to promote a less confrontational or destructive culture and work with others to overcome the effects of bullying. You might want to discuss what makes a person an anti-bullying champion.

**Quick Anti-Bullying Tips**

- **Show open body language** – stand or sit face onto a person; do not huddle or cover your body or face with your arms or hands, use you whole body to express a willingness to communicate openly, smile with your whole face, keep eye contact;

- **Try not to show fear** – don't put your hands over your face, cover your body with your arms, turn away, hunch your shoulders or fiddle nervously with your hands, keep eye contact;

- **Tell someone who will listen** – think carefully about someone who will listen, someone you know for their integrity and listening skills, or a helpline like Childline (0800 1111), Samaritans, etc;

- **Do not be a bystander**, help those in need even if only to get more help – if you observe a bullying incident don’t just stand by and let it happen. If you can’t intervene yourself go and get some help. Intervention can be just a cough or a word or phrase. In some cases this will be enough to make the bully understand that their conduct is not approved of and for others in the group to indicate they are also anti-bullying.

- **Keep eye contact** – this comes up time and again. It is the easiest way of facing down a bully, and of showing openness and not fear.

These Quick Tips are from [www.antibullyingweek.co.uk](http://www.antibullyingweek.co.uk)

**Can bullying happen in churches?**

Yes of course it can. It can happen anywhere and in any community. It’s about the abuse of power and inappropriate social relationships. Furthermore, churches may be poorly equipped to respond to it either because they don’t or won’t recognise it; they don’t talk about it or have strategies to combat it. Of course some do have policies and strategies to combat bullying and promote an anti-bullying culture. You might want to consider developing one at your place.

**What can be done?**

**Awareness:** build awareness about bullying and anti-bullying in your church and community, concentrate on building confidence in dealing with the issue, with bullies and those that have been affected by bullying;
Activities and workshops: can be tailor made locally from material available here or on line or your could approach another organisation about running these, targeting a particular age group or leadership group;

Worship: can be helpful to those who have been bullied and it is rightly part of our justice agenda to include the theme of responding to bullying and promoting anti-bullying in our worship.

2. Stories about experiences of bullying

These are all based on real incidents but have been anonymised for inclusion in this material.

1. Wrong church?

She wasn’t a minister of the same denomination, she knew that, but she’d never thought this would be a cause for bullying. It was her first ministry in an ecumenical church. It began slowly: one man in the congregation had been a minister in another place, was now retired but he knew the way it should be done. She didn’t. He’d point it out, occasionally at first and then more often, drawing more people’s attention to her inexperience. After the first six months it became common at meetings that he would find some fault with something she had done or the way the meeting was being conducted. Then, a few months later, he started turning his back on her when she was speaking. After a few weeks she noted that others were doing the same, literally giving her the cold shoulder. She felt undermined. She raised the matter with a colleague who dismissed it lightly as her imagination and advised her to pray more. She carried on for a bit. It got worse. She’d find she’d been given false information about something that made her look incompetent at a meeting or during the service. She raised the matter with someone else she trusted who said: ‘They are not as dangerous as they seem’, which might have been true but gave her little clue as to what to do. Her doctor treated her for depression and eventually after three years she left, tired out, unhappy and still with little idea of what she could have done differently.

The retired minister was asked to ‘look after’ the congregation until another minister was found. The next minister was from a partner church in Africa and he was black. Six months after he started the second minister met the previous minister by co-incidence in another city. He told her he was having a terrible time and described behaviour directed at him that was like that she had experienced. He said his colleague had dismissed what had been happening and no one seemed to believe him. She told him she believed him and told him what had happened to her. She advised him to speak to a more senior colleague. Afterwards she reflected that firstly it had not been her imagination after all, and secondly she still didn’t really know what to do.

Some things to discuss:

1. If the woman had spoken to you when this first happened, what would you have suggested?
2. If you were the senior colleague and heard from one of the ministers about this, what would you do?
3. If you were a member of this congregation, would you recognise this as bullying and if so what would you do about it?

2. Wrong sexuality?
The young male minister was backed up against the vestry door, the knob pressing painfully into his back, as the older, heavier man pushed him in the chest. ‘I know your sort, you queer bugger, and I don’t like you. We don’t want your sort here. Pervert!’ He spat in the minister’s face. There was a noise outside and the bully stepped back, pulled him away from the door and went out. The minister was shaking. He wiped his face and sat down. A few minutes later an older woman from the congregation came in with some flowers and began looking in the desk for some string. ‘You alright dear?’ she enquired. ‘You look at bit pale. Tired I expect, are you?’ Need a bit of a rest. Go home and put your feet up’. She went out with the flowers.

He went home and thought it over. This was not his first encounter with the bully, who had made several other remarks before, but this was the first time he’d physically assaulted him. He had no witnesses. Should he call the police, speak to the Elders, ring his friend or what?

Some things to discuss:
1. What should the minister do?
2. What should the Elders do?
3. What should the police do?

3. Wrong friend?
He was lonely. No one seemed to understand that. Since his best friend had moved to another school he’d not really made friends with anyone else. They all had their friendship groups and he hadn’t found it easy to fit in to these close knit groups. After school he’d come up to his room and start his homework on his laptop. Then when he got fed up with that, he’d look at some other websites. There were friendly people out there – or so he had thought. A few weeks ago he’d met someone on line. She’d seemed nice and asked for his photo that he’d sent. But now he realised he’d been lied to. Since then the messages had shown it wasn’t a girl but a man who wanted him to send more and more explicit photos of himself and saying if he didn’t do what he wanted then he’d post the photos on the internet for all his friends and family to see. He was getting desperate. He didn’t want to do these things but he didn’t know what to do. He wasn’t concentrating on his schoolwork and he wasn’t sleeping either. There had been an assembly at school about cyber bullying so he knew now what to call what was happening to him. But he couldn’t tell anyone, could he? Certainly no one at school. He’d just look so stupid. There was someone though; perhaps he could tell Dave at the church. After all, he’d known him since he was a kid and he was a good listener.

Some things to discuss
1. Imagine you are Dave. What will you do when the boy tells you about the cyber bullying?
2. In a group, plan and write a short article about cyber bullying for the church magazine or newsletter, or a poster to go up in the church buildings to inform and support people who might be concerned about cyber bullying.

3. What do young people and parents from faith communities think?

In a study carried out in Bradford in 2008 with young people and parents from faith communities both young people and parents thought that bullying was common. Here are some comments made by parents from that study that you could discuss.

One Christian (Protestant) parent said

*That’s natural: children will always like somebody to pick on.*

Another mother from the same background said:

*I’ve taught my sons to defend themselves but not to fight so they’ll walk away. They’ll walk away from any vicious or violent situation but I’ve told them they shouldn’t stand there and let somebody hurt them so they will defend, so they will push somebody away.*

A Catholic mother said

*They have to stick up for themselves…or they’ll carry on getting picked on… stick up for themselves in a certain way but do it the right way rather than do it the violent way.*

And this response from a Protestant parent:

*It’s unlikely that they’re going to mix with people who are likely to be confrontational or break the rules or push the boundaries. Both of our children have always managed to find a group of people who are very similar to them.*

Some of the young people involved in the study made links between religious teaching that advocates non-violence and their attitude towards fighting back. The first comment is from a Christian boy and the second from a Muslim boy, both aged 14.

*I think religion’s got quite a lot to do with it because the only reason he’s picking on you is because of religion, so it could be like to do with race, racism and stuff.*

*If you love your neighbour you’re not going to want to hurt them*

However, a number of the young people recognised that it is not always easy abiding by religious teachings on this matter. The first is a child from a Christian background and the second a Muslim, again both 14.

*Somebody comes up to you and says I don’t like you, you don’t just go oh no, the Bible says not to fight, so I can’t fight. If someone starts hitting you you’ve*
got to stand up, but if someone’s calling you names or they don’t [hit you], then don’t [hit them].

Well it depends, because the church teachings are don’t hurt people but your family’s teachings could be different.

Some families had challenging experiences to report. Here a Protestant mother explains what happened to her son:

*I got it completely wrong. I took the Christian line about showing God’s love and it [the bullying] got really destructive.*

Another parent from a similar background referred to the parable of the Good Samaritan saying she encouraged her son ‘not to walk by on the other side’ when his younger brother was being bullied even though the school line was ‘he just needs to learn not to get involved and I said well that’s not good enough’.

These examples could be used in a discussion. You could put them on some power point slides, or on some cards. You could summarise the main themes and pose some questions, for example:

1. Is bullying common or inevitable?
2. Do you think religion or faith is relevant to dealing with bullying by parents or young people?
3. How would you respond to any of the young people or parents quoted?

The full report of the study is available at: http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/religion-beliefs-and-parenting-practices

4. What can we do?

**Take over Day**

In 2013 the Children’s Commissioner for England and Wales promoted Take over Day on 22nd November. The idea was to encourage children and adults to work together in each school or community in a new way, with children taking the adult roles for the day. At Silcoates, Year 9 were the first group to lead Take over Day. Adults were asked to agree to the children taking their roles for part of the day. Everyone joined in from the Headmaster to the Grounds Staff. You will find the reports here: http://www.silcoates.org.uk/?s=take+over+day

You might like to try a version of Take over Day this year at your school, project or church. It doesn’t have to be on the Friday of anti-bullying week. It can be any day. Here’s what you need to do:

1. Find some people interested in swapping roles – maybe the helpers at the lunch club or the Elders could swap with children and young people from the uniformed organisations or a local school.
2. Choose a day and time on which to do your swap – advertise it well in advance.
3. Get some feedback from those taking part: what was good; what didn’t work so well; what could we do differently here?
The swap need not be just children or young people with adults, but could also be adult to adult. However, it could be a good opportunity to invite some children and young people into the church to explore some of the roles.

**Why do this?**

You might be wondering how this promotes anti-bullying? Bullying is about power and how it is used and abused in some contexts or cultures. When we swap roles we someone we see a situation from their perspective and have opportunity to reflect on our different parts in new ways. Developing an anti-bullying culture is as much about building up respect and understanding as about stopping people hitting each other.

**Other Actions**

You might want to consider
1. specific support or help for those who are being or have been bullied;
2. a policy to protect people from being bullied in your church/community or workplace;
3. having an anti-bullying team in your church or community project; try to have a range of people, different genders, ages and experiences;

**5. Material for worship**

**Remembering the Bible**

When using a remembered or oral bible strategy in worship or discussion groups I sometimes start with a category: ‘What do you remember from the bible about bullying?’ ‘Can you remember any stories about bullying from the bible?’

What if they say ‘No’?

This is not an uncommon answer, either because

- they are not used to the strategy and are not confident about responding: offer participants the chance to talk together in small groups before opening up the discussion to see if this helps;
- they are not used to seeing the bible like this: for them the bible might not contain stories about bullying because they are not used to looking for such stories in the bible; again the small group work might help;
- they are uncomfortable with the subject and not used to talking about bullying in church; again the small group work may help.

Even so, there is always a risk when using the remembered bible strategy: one person may dominate the responses, others may keep quiet for different reasons particularly if they feel vulnerable, or the subject might get hi-jacked or go off at a tangent. These are not reasons not to try it, just things to be aware of.
Think of some bible stories about bullying. 
For example, the Joseph story in Genesis – Joseph is assaulted by his brothers, bullied by Potiphar’s wife and later manipulates his brothers with the ‘lost cup’ incident. 
The Joseph story is quite a good one to choose as it can be reasonably well known and the format of ‘Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat’ has placed it in popular culture. There will be other ‘Joseph’ resources to refer to on the internet.

**Christ the King**
Anti-Bullying week usually coincides with the Feast of Christ the King in the Christian calendar (that is the week before Advent Sunday), which in 2014 will be 23rd November. This can be quite helpful as it is a good time to remember Jesus life and ministry. Add the aspect of bulling and some points for discussion could be:

- What would Jesus have said/did say about bullying?
- Was Jesus bullied?
- Was he a bully or anti-bully?

One of the all-age activities that can be used for ‘Christ the King’ is the Jesus life-line. If you are not familiar with it you can find the instructions in a downloadable pdf on the Vision4life website here: [http://www.vision4life.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/jesus-life-line1.pdf](http://www.vision4life.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/jesus-life-line1.pdf)

After remembering Jesus like this you can open up the discussion about which stories seem to be relevant to anti-bullying.

**Bible Readings**
One episode that appears in the four written gospels that you might want to reflect on is how Jesus is bullied after his arrest. You can find it at Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15: 16-20, Luke 22; 63-65 and John 19: 1-6. You might find a commentary useful to consider the similarities or differences between these versions.

**Prayers**
These prayers are as much about creating a just and accountable culture as specifically against bullies or bullying

1. **Litany for anti-bullying week**

   When relationships go wrong and we misuse our power
   **God forgive us and restore us.**
   When people are hurt and we fail to notice
   **God forgive us and restore us.**
   When vulnerable people confide in us
   **Help us to listen and affirm them**
   When people need a safe place to heal their wounds
Help us to work together and make it happen
When we are advocates for just interactions
**Christ be with us**
When we make equal relationships
**Christ be with us**

Transform your people and this community
To be a haven, a home and a place of hope.

2. God in new forms

_Editing God_
_Hot-water bottle God_
_Surfing God_
_Gd d txta_

When every bush is burning,
I try to look for you carefully
down every pavement crack.
When anxiety, uncertainty and grief
roll me into the surf again,
you’re the board I cling to,
the lifejacket that buoys me up,
the one who pulls me back to land.
When my world shrinks
to a rocking chair in a cold room
you’re the hot-water bottle
that keeps the blood coursing in my veins.
As I crawl through every page,
alert to errors and omissions,
you’re my co-editor,
helping me to see what matters,
filling in gaps and starting new paragraphs.
Wen time is shrt
nd fngrs do d talking,
d txts go bak nd 4th
nd we giggle 2geva
Like teenagers.

3. Prayer for our community

Some strive for the perfect community;
everything in its place,
neatly laid out,
We seek a community for everyone:
perfection is not as important
as acceptance and welcome.
Make our community holy, God of all: 
may justice flow amongst us and between us; 
may this be a place of refuge 
where people are valued.

4. On the streets

Feeling scared: 
road rage in the car park, 
intimidation at the bus stop 
bullying at the school gate. 
Feeling vulnerable; 
queuing for a pension, 
crossing the park, 
walking down the high street. 
Sirens wail and blue lights flash 
stoking up the tensions. 
God, we need liberating: 
may the pedestrian crossing be our Red Sea. 
Christ, we need company: 
may the car park be our Easter garden. 
Spirit, we need affirmation: 
may the high street be our place of Pentecost. 
Be there for us, Holy Three, 
in every created thing, 
in every human interaction, 
in every life giving encounter.

5. In school and out

The bell rings and we move 
with a mission towards our next goal. 
Sometimes eager, keen and enthusiastic, 
we rush along corridors ready for the next challenge. 
Sometimes hesitant, uncertain 
we wonder what lies ahead. 
Will they be there again? 
Names calling, humiliating or worse: 
a feeling of dread rising, wanting to flee. 
Achievement and success feel good 
but failure sticks in the throat 
drowning self-confidence. 
Accompany us in our growing up: 
stick by us all our school days. 
Under your guidance we will emerge 
to take on the world.

6. Still growing

We are nurturing faith in each other:
listening or reflecting,  
questions or stories.  
Like the well-worn farmer  
we turn over the fertile soil.  
With the tide falling,  
like persistent waders,  
we probe the exposed mud flats,  
As wicket keeper  
we stand ready to catch  
the slippery stuff of life  
as it slides into our hands.  
We make little of it,  
dismissing how these small acts  
lubricate the life force.  
Yet each of us knows  
how hollow the feeling  
when hounded on the empty shore  
by the dogs of doubt.

7. The playground of possibilities

Leave the outhouse of despair,  
the barren barns damp with disuse,  
the convoluted corridors of conceit,  
where low lighting hides the true colours.  
Leave all the gaping tombs  
and come outside  
to the playground of possibilities.  
Roll in the mud if you must,  
swing from the trees if you will,  
slide, slip and saunter,  
twirl, twist and waddle,  
bounce, boing and be  
unrestrained in embracing  
the recreational potential  
of humanity.  
Do not buckle, accept or agree  
to be pushed into the tram lines  
of timidity.  
See the rainbow colours of life  
reflected in a puddle.  
Admire the skipping squirrel  
and seek to emulate her glide and verve.  
You were made for this;  
the spitting image of your cosmic forebear,  
it is written in every cell,  
and this is the playground of possibilities  
so come and play today!
**Psalms**

Psalm 22, especially verses 4-9
Psalm 130

**Hymns**

Brother, sister let me serve you
I heard the voice of Jesus say
We turn to you, O God of every nation
Lord, for the years
Put peace into each others hands

**Useful websites**

There are many anti-bullying resources available. Here are just a few suggestions:

http://www.antibullyingweek.co.uk/
There are numerous resources available here and some are free.

www.childline.org.uk
Is a national organisation with a freephone number that seeks to support children and young people (0800 1111)

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/
A website for young people, parents and professionals concerned about the well being of young people.

http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/
This website includes a lot of statistics about bullying, mostly from the USA, and suggestions for what to do about bullying in a wide range of contexts including workplace bullying.

**Feedback**

These resources have been prepared by Janet Lees, who is Chaplain of Silcoates School, Wakefield. If you want to contact her about this or any other issues please email her at janetlees@silcoates.org.uk. Janet would welcome feedback about these resources. Please contact her to let her know how you used them and any comments you have.