



Anti-Bullying Policy

1. Introduction

Fighting Words is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and creative environment where all children, young people, and vulnerable adults can express themselves freely without fear of bullying, harassment, or discrimination. This policy is developed in line with:

- Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour (2024)
- Children First Act 2015
- Equal Status Acts 2000–2018
- Fighting Words Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy (2026)

Bullying interferes with the rights of the child (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) and undermines the values of respect, creativity, and kindness that Fighting Words upholds.

2. Definition of Bullying Behaviour

Bullying is targeted, repeated behaviour (online or offline) that:

- Causes harm (physical, emotional, or social).
- Involves an imbalance of power (e.g., age, size, social status, disability, race, gender or other factors).
- Is deliberate and unwanted by the person experiencing it.

Examples of bullying include:

- Physical: Hitting, pushing, damaging property.
- Verbal: Name-calling, insults, threats or offensive jokes.
- Relational: Exclusion, spreading rumours, manipulating friendships.
- Online (Cyberbullying): Harmful messages, sharing private images without consent, impersonation, or exclusion from online groups.
- Identity-Based: Racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, disablist or religious bullying.



Not bullying (but still unacceptable):

- One-off arguments or disagreements.
- Accidental harm (though this should still be addressed).
- Behaviour from students with special educational needs that is not deliberate (e.g., social communication difficulties).

Criminal Behaviour:

Some forms of bullying may be illegal, including:

- Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco's Law): Sharing intimate images without consent.
- Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989: Racist or hate speech.
- Assault or Sexual Harassment: Physical violence or unwanted sexual advances.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, volunteers, interns, visiting writers/artists and contractors working with Fighting Words.
- All children, young people and vulnerable adults participating in Fighting Words programmes (on-site, off-site, or online).
- Online spaces managed by Fighting Words (e.g., social media, virtual workshops).

4. Prevention Strategies

Fighting Words will:

- Promote a culture of kindness and respect through workshops, training, and creative activities.
- Train staff and volunteers on recognising and addressing bullying (including cyberbullying, identity-based bullying, and sexual harassment).
- Supervise activities to ensure safe physical and online spaces (e.g., visible supervision in workshops, monitoring of digital platforms).
- Encourage reporting by:
 - Designating trusted adults (e.g., workshop leaders, Operations Director) for participants to confide in.



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- Providing anonymous reporting options (e.g., suggestion boxes, digital forms).
- Ensuring no retaliation against those who report bullying.
- Display this policy prominently in centres, on the website, and in participant packs.
- Collaborate with parents/guardians to reinforce anti-bullying messages at home.

Specific Measures:

- Cyberbullying: Clear rules on digital behaviour (e.g., no sharing of private images, respectful online communication).
- Identity-Based Bullying: Workshops on diversity, inclusion, and challenging stereotypes.
- Sexual Harassment: Zero-tolerance approach; training on consent and respectful relationships.

5. Reporting and Addressing Bullying

5.1 How to Report

- Participants: Tell a trusted adult (staff/volunteer), use anonymous reporting tools, or contact the Designated Liaison Person (DLP):
 - Sara Bennett (Operations Director): 087 274 6621 | sara@fightingwords.ie
 - Deputy DLP: Mark Davidson (Programmes Manager): 086 046 1891 | mark@fightingwords.ie
- Staff/Volunteers: Report concerns to the DLP immediately. Use the Fighting Words Incident Report Form (Appendix D of Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy).

5.2 Steps to Address Bullying

1. Listen and Reassure:
 - Take the report seriously. Reassure the person that they are not to blame and that action will be taken.
 - Do not promise confidentiality if the safety of others is at risk.
2. Record the Incident:
 - Document what, where, when, who was involved, and any witnesses.
 - Use the Standard Reporting Form..
3. Investigate:



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- Speak to all parties individually first, then as a group if needed.
 - Avoid leading questions (e.g., “Did X hit you?” → “Can you tell me what happened?”).
4. Take Action:
- Stop the bullying immediately (e.g., separate participants, remove online content).
 - Support the person experiencing bullying (e.g., check-ins, counselling referrals).
 - Address the behaviour of the person bullying (e.g., education on impact, restorative practices if appropriate).
 - Inform parents/guardians (unless doing so would put the child at further risk).
5. Follow Up:
- Check in with all parties within 20 days to ensure the bullying has stopped.
 - If bullying continues, escalate to disciplinary action (e.g., suspension from programmes) or external authorities (Tusla, An Garda Síochána) if necessary.

5.3 Child Protection Concerns

If bullying involves significant harm (physical, emotional, or sexual abuse), or if measures to stop it are ineffective:

- Report to Tusla (Child and Family Agency) via the DLP.
- Contact An Garda Síochána if there is immediate danger or criminal behaviour.

6. Support for Those Involved

- For those experiencing bullying:
 - Offer emotional support (e.g., counselling, peer mentoring).
 - Provide safety plans (e.g., changing workshop groups, supervised breaks).
- For those displaying bullying behaviour:
 - Educate on the impact of their actions.
 - Identify underlying issues (e.g., lack of empathy, personal struggles).
 - Refer to support services if needed (e.g., NEPS, youth workers).
- For witnesses:
 - Encourage bystander intervention (e.g., reporting, supporting peers).



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7. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- Confidentiality: Information is shared on a need-to-know basis to protect those involved.
- Records: All incidents are documented and stored securely (in line with GDPR and Data Protection Acts).
- Retention: Records are kept for seven years or as required by law.

8. Review and Oversight

- Annual Review: This policy will be reviewed annually (next review: May 2027) in consultation with staff, volunteers, participants, and parents.
- Monitoring: The Operations Director will track incidents and report trends to the Board of Directors quarterly.
- Feedback: Participants, parents, and staff are encouraged to provide input on the policy's effectiveness.

10. Related Policies and Contacts

- Fighting Words Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy (2026)
- Code of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers
- Health and Safety Policy
- Tusla: www.tusla.ie | Duty Social Work Team (Dublin North City): 01 856 6856
- An Garda Síochána: 999/112 (emergencies) | Fitzgibbon Street Station: 01 666 8400
- Childline: 1800 66 66 66 | www.childline.ie
- Webwise (Online Safety): www.webwise.ie

Revised: May 2026

Next Review: May 2027