

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **14 March 2007**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Evaluation of work undertaken by East Sussex's Anti-bullying Team**

Purpose of report: **To update the Committee of the key achievements of the Anti-Bullying Team.**

RECOMMENDATION – To endorse the work of Anti-Bullying Team's across East Sussex.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report outlines some of the key achievements of the work undertaken by the Anti-Bullying Team and summarises the key findings of a recent evaluation of the overall effectiveness and impact of the Team.

2. Context

2.1 The Team currently consists of a Strategic Lead Officer for Anti-Bullying, an Anti-Bullying Caseworker, and an Administrator/Information Officer. Nationally, the Anti-Bullying Team still remains distinctive and unique, viewed as a model of best practice by the Department for Education and Skills and the Anti-Bullying Alliance.

2.2 The Team provides both strategic and operational support to schools, to embed effective whole school approaches to anti-bullying through short, medium and long-term strategies. From Jan – Dec 2006, 179 bullying cases were referred to the Anti-Bullying Caseworker. Of the total number of cases referred, 125 (70%) reached a positive outcome. 18 (10%) parents declined support from the Team, and 36 (20%) remain open due to their complex nature.

3. Key achievements and challenges

3.1 The Team has successfully delivered a range of anti-bullying strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour across 43 primary schools and with every secondary school over the previous 12 months. Work has included curriculum based workshops, twilight training for staff, lunchtime supervisory training, mediation training for adults and young people. Schools where work has been undertaken have reported a reduction in the overall number of incidents of relational conflict and bullying behaviour, with staff reporting feeling more confident to deal with and resolve conflict more positively.

3.2 Training children, young people and adults in conflict resolution, peer listening skills therefore remains a priority in order to equip schools with the skills and confidence to address specific incidents of bullying behaviour themselves.

3.3 The Team has focussed attention on supporting the promotion of positive friendships amongst young people in addressing bullying behaviour after friendships have gone wrong. This solution focused approach has been well received by many schools.

3.4 Feedback from parents and children remains very positive. The majority of children and young people found the support offered by the Anti-Bullying Caseworker helped to resolve the bullying behaviour. Many stated that they had received the right kind of information, advice and support, and all said that they had been involved in the discussions and decision making process to address their bullying situation.

3.5 Children and young people identified a number of ways the service might be improved including, better aftercare support following the initial intervention by the Anti-Bullying Team, more work with perpetrators of bullying behaviour in the school, and more information about the service around the school.

3.6 The evaluation clearly demonstrated that the Team and schools should not underestimate the importance of maintaining ongoing communication with parents and carers, children and young people, in order to reassure them that the bullying behaviour is being addressed. From the perspective of parents a critical component of the Anti-Bullying Caseworker's work was supporting them in communicating with their child's school, particularly where dialogue had become difficult. Parents also stressed the importance of being kept informed by the school about action they might be taking to address the bullying behaviour to allay any fears or concerns they may have.

3.7 Schools recognised and valued the quick response of Team's advice and support in delivering anti-bullying work and recognised the importance of having an impartial third party when dealing with specific incidents of bullying behaviour.

3.8 In a recent survey of schools, a small number said that they were unaware of the range of work undertaken by the Team. Some schools therefore commented that more should be done to promote the service. However, further promotion of the Team would inevitably increase the level of demand placed on the Team which would prove difficult to sustain in the long-term.

3.9 A number of small scale projects are being developed over the coming months. These include:

- ⇒ Supporting vulnerable young people (and their parents) during the transition from primary to secondary school
- ⇒ Undertake a Safer Schools Survey in primary and secondary schools to capture young people's perceptions of bullying behaviour in schools and the wider community
- ⇒ Support East's Sussex's UK Youth Parliament to encourage every school in the county to sign-up to the DfES's 'Anti-Bullying Charter'; and
- ⇒ Undertake workshops in schools to address relational conflict and bullying behaviour amongst young women

4. Future areas of work to build upon

4.1 Outlined below are future areas of work that will need addressing by the Anti-Bullying Team and key stakeholders.

4.2 To further promote the Anti-Bullying Team to parents and carers, children and young people and schools to increase the accessibility of the services offered. However, the Anti-Bullying Team is aware that this could significantly increase the demand for the service.

4.3 To continue to build on existing working partnerships between secondary schools and the Anti-Bullying Team to support young people where cases of bullying behaviour are proving difficult to resolve, to ensure more positive outcomes for young people.

4.4 The Anti-Bullying Team and schools need to prioritise timely and effective communication with parents and carers, and young people throughout the whole process of resolving incidents of bullying.

4.5 To provide further information to schools to ensure that they are better informed about the range of support and training opportunities currently provided by the Team.

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Background Documents: Evaluation Briefing (draft) March 2007; East Sussex's Anti-Bullying Strategy – Executive Summary; and Anti-Bullying Team - Annual Report 2005-2006