



**Meeting: Full Council**

**Date: 5 February 2015**

**Wards Affected: All Wards**

**Report Title: Torbay Community Anti-Bullying Strategy (Mayoral Decision)**

**Is the decision a key decision? No**

**When does the decision need to be implemented? February 2015**

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## **1. Purpose and Introduction**

1.1 Bullying is an issue that affects many young people in Torbay, especially those in more vulnerable groups. Its affects can be devastating and long lasting with evidence suggesting a wide range of impacts both on the individual and society as a whole when it is not adequately dealt with. The issue is repeatedly raised by young people as their number one concern and therefore it is the duty of elected members to consider their concerns and seek to address them. A strategy to tackle bullying has been created by the community and this report requests that the council endorses that strategy.

## **2. Proposed Decision**

2.1 That the Mayor be recommended to support and endorse the Torbay Community Anti-Bullying Strategy 2015 set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report on behalf of Torbay Council.

## **3. Reason for Decision**

3.1 This report asks that council members support and endorse this community wide strategy for dealing with bullying. This is a community wide strategy rather than just a council strategy and therefore while it does not need to be implemented by the council, endorsement would help the community in applying for funding and securing the support of organisations across the bay.

3.2 By endorsing the Torbay Community Anti-Bullying Strategy 2015, the council will help the community to implement measures to help tackle and reduce bullying within the bay.

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## Supporting Information

### 4. Position

- 4.1 In January 2013 a range of Council officers and community groups came together to form a task and finish group called Celebrating Diversity with the remit to review, update and revamp the council's existing Anti-Bullying Strategy. A new strategy has been created which can be found in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The Anti Bullying Alliance defines bullying as *“the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or through cyberspace.”*
- 4.3 Anyone can instigate or be a victim of bullying, regardless of gender, age, ability or disability, class, social group, sexuality, ethnicity or cultural background and the nature of bullying is changing and evolving as technology develops. It can happen anywhere including in the home, at school, at work and in many other places. There is the potential for it to happen 24/7, giving the victim no escape. Estimates of the number of young people who are bullied range between a third and two thirds and it is one of the biggest issues faced by them.
- 4.3 Bullying is often aimed at certain groups e.g. because of race, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation. It can also be about appearance, ability, age or where a person comes from or lives. Other groups, including young carers, those with mental health issues and children in care, are also at greater risk of bullying.
- 4.4 Bullying has many negative effects on a victim's physical and mental health including:
- feelings of loneliness, stress, fear, depression, anxiety and insecurity;
  - lack of self esteem and confidence;
  - not wanting to attend school, resulting in higher truancy rates and lower academic achievements;
  - physical symptoms including lack of appetite, nightmares, stomach aches, panic attacks and headaches;
  - social withdrawal and the inability to form friendships; and
  - increased risk of self harm, misuse of drugs and alcohol, and suicide.

There are also negative impacts on bystanders and the bullies themselves, who are more likely to engage in risky and violent behaviour.

- 4.5 Within Torbay each organisation that works with children and young people should have an anti-bullying policy. Children and young people have access to various agencies for support to reduce bullying, including from the local authority. There is also support available within the voluntary and community sector. However, the issue still remains the number one concern of young people in the bay and more needs to be done to tackle it.
- 4.5 National legislation on this issue places the responsibility for tackling bullying primarily with schools. As many schools are now outside the remit of the council's authority, the strategy seeks to incentivise schools to follow government guidance and best practice in tackling bullying through the incentive of a Kitemark.
- 4.6 The central policy proposal of the strategy is to create a Kitemark scheme. All those organisations working with children or young people which implement best practice measures, supported by relevant policies, procedures, systems and training for all staff and volunteers, will be granted the Torbay Anti-Bullying Kitemark. While this is likely to be primarily self assessed in the short term, once funding is secured organisations will be assessed by young people.
- 4.7 The strategy also includes a commitment to widespread training in the restorative justice approach which has been shown to reduce bullying, as well as providing a range of resources for schools and other organisations to use.
- 4.8 The strategy will be overseen and implemented by a consortium of voluntary sector organisations and the Celebrating Diversity Group who are accountable to the Youth Trust.

## **5. Possibilities and Options**

- 5.1 An alternative option would be for the council to refuse to endorse this strategy. This would make it more difficult for the strategy to be implemented or for national funding to be applied for.
- 5.2 The other alternative would be to create a new strategy which would be time consuming and the council would need to use its own resources to undertake this.

## **6. Fair Decision Making**

- 6.1 Consultation has been carried out with a variety of stakeholders including schools, young people and community & voluntary sector groups.
- 6.2 A public bay wide consultation was carried out for a month in February 2014 and feedback was used to amend and update the strategy. The feedback showed that there was broad support for the strategy, while some changes were required.

- 6.3 Consultation has been undertaken with groups of young people who also supported the strategy and were keen to be involved in helping implement it.
- 6.4 All schools have been sent a copy of the strategy for feedback and meetings with some schools have resulted in amendments being made.
- 6.5 Implementing this strategy will result in reduced incidences and more effective approaches to tackling bullying and will therefore have positive impacts on the community and especially on young people. There will also be a positive impact on equalities as vulnerable groups are those most likely to be bullied. An Equality Impact Assessment can be found in appendix two.

## **7. Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012**

- 7.1 These proposals do not require any procurement or provision by the council.

## **8. Risks**

- 8.1 If this strategy is not endorsed then the council and community will not have an overarching strategy for tackling bullying.
- 8.2 Without council endorsement for this strategy, there is a risk that fewer organisations would support or apply for the Kitemark.
- 8.3 There is also a risk that it will be more difficult for the Celebrating Diversity Group to apply for funding from national bodies if the council has not endorsed the strategy.
- 8.4 There could be a risk to the council's reputation if it chose not to seek to tackle the issue of bullying in Torbay.
- 8.5 There are no risks to implementing this strategy.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Torbay Anti-Bullying Strategy 2015 – 2019

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

## **Additional Information**

None