Yorkshire Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs

Cyber Bullying Policy & Guidelines

Approved by the Executive Committee
25th April 2024

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Statement of intent

The Yorkshire Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs is committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our members and stakeholders. **Bullying of any kind is unacceptable throughout the Federation.** If cyber bullying does occur, all members should be able to inform officers of incidents knowing that this will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Bullying using social media seems to be the most common form of bullying, as messages can often be sent anonymously. Those sending the malicious or distasteful messages are not present to see the impact it has on recipients, but the damage it causes is very real.

Objectives of this Policy

- To prevent and tackle all forms of online and cyber bullying.
- All members, elected officials, club leaders, staff, and parents should have an understanding of what cyber bullying is.
- All members, elected officials, club leaders, staff, and parents should be aware of the YFYFC policy on cyber bullying and be able to follow it when cyber bullying arises and is reported.
- As a Federation, we take any form of bullying seriously. Members and parents should be assured that they will be supported when cyber bullying is reported.

Links to Legislation

The Equality Act 2010

The Children's Act 1989

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Malicious Communications Act 1988

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

Communications Act 2003

Defamation Act 2013

Obscene Publication Act 1959

Computer Misuse Act 1990

Protection of Children Act 1978

Online Safety Act 2023

Bullying

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person, by another person or group, resulting in pain and distress to the victim. It may happen face to face or through cyberspace. For further details please refer to YFYFC Anti-bullying Policy 2024.

Cyber bullying is **'the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else.'**

Cyber bullying is a 'method' of bullying. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, it differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the

difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity; and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.

Methods used can be through smartphones, tablets, text, instant messenger, gaming websites, social media sites and apps, sending inappropriate images (include cartoon images) photographs and videos (webcam). The most common forms of cyber bullying includes sending or posting abusive comments about another person or group, blackmailing people to send personal details or images, uploading and sharing hurtful images or videos, deliberately excluding others from online social groups, impersonating others online with the intent to cause hurt or embarrassment, targeting vulnerable individuals and groups with abusive comments and abusing others through gaming sites.

Regular offensive or abusive messages on social media or to personal mobile phones can be classed as a form of stalking or harassment and can be a criminal offence.

Who can be cyber bullied?

Anyone can be bullied online by anyone else (including people impersonating children).

Apps to be aware of:

Facebook	Dropboxes
Instagram	Rate my Teacher
Twitter	Rate my Social Worker
TikTok	Tumblr
Snapchat	Linkedin
WhatsApp	Pinterest
Youtube	Google+
Zoom Meetings	Microsoft Teams

Apps are evolving so new apps are designed on an almost daily basis. Clubs/Districts/County should be aware of members ages when inviting them to join YFC groups i.e. WhatsApp should be for members aged 16+ only. The age guideline was updated in 2018 from 13 to 16 years of age to comply to GDPR legislation.

Cyber Bullying Methods

Threats and intimidation - Serious threats can be sent to anyone by smartphone, tablet, email, and via comments on websites, social networking sites or public message boards.

Harassment or stalking

Repeated, prolonged, unwanted texting, whether it is explicitly offensive or not, is a form of harassment. Online stalking (sometimes referred to as 'cyberstalking'), where a person's online activities are constantly monitored, can cause psychological harm and fear. Previously safe and enjoyable online environments can be experienced as threatening, and online activity may become a source of anxiety.

Harassment and stalking can take several and often multiple forms online and may or may not be a continuation of offline harassment or lead to physical harassment and stalking.

Forms of harassment include:

- repeatedly sending unwanted text or instant messages, or making numerous phone calls (including silent calls)

- using public forums, such as public message boards or chatrooms, to repeatedly harass, or to post negative, derogatory or defamatory statements/photographs in order to provoke a response
- tracking targets by using spyware
- sending computer viruses

Vilification/defamation – Cyber bullying can include posting upsetting or defamatory remarks about an individual online, name-calling or posting abusive threats using a mobile device. These may be general insults, or include prejudiced based bullying. People may use their smartphones or email to send sexist, homophobic and racist messages, or they may attack other kinds of difference – a physical or mental disability, cultural or religious background, appearance, or socio-economic position.

Ostracising/peer rejection/exclusion - Online exclusion can be harder to detect than members obviously being marginalised in a club meeting/social event, where there are club leaders or parents present. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Zoom Meetings etc. provide a platform for young people to establish an online presence and to talk with other network YFYFC members/friends/followers/strangers. They can be an important extension of a young person's social space and activity. It is possible for a group of members to set up a closed group, which can protect them from unwanted contact. It also means that excluding someone – by refusing to return or acknowledge messages; deleting them from their friendship lists on WhatsApp; or using 'ignore/mute' functions – can be extremely hurtful.

Identity theft, unauthorised access, and impersonation - 'Hacking' generally means accessing someone else's account by finding out or guessing their username and password information. Hacking into systems, accounts or files is not automatically a form of cyber bullying, but it is always a serious issue. Hacking is illegal under the Computer Misuse Act 1990.

Hacking can include accessing and copying someone's information, emails, or photographs, in order to harass or humiliate them. This could include posting private information on public sites, emailing, or forwarding data by mobile phone, or printing and circulating paper copies.
Deleting someone's information – ie electronically submitted or stored assignments and homework, or important emails.
Impersonating someone – ie pretending to be the person whose account has been hacked in order to post abusive comments, bad language, acquire friends etc. This might include sending Instant Messages or emails, or may involve using someone's smartphone to send abusive calls, texts or images.

Publicly posting, sending, or forwarding personal or private information or images - Once electronic messages or photographs are made public, containing them becomes very difficult/impossible. Video or pictures can be passed between smartphones, sent by text to other phones, uploaded to websites, or posted to public video-hosting sites. Most young people are aware of physical assaults that are recorded and circulated, usually via smartphone. People who record attacks can be actively engaging in cyber bullying. Circulating images of attacks can also be a form of harassment, and will certainly compound the harm of the original attack.

Websites are potentially viewable by millions of people. Even after pages or comments have been removed, 'cached' or screenshot copies may still be available.

Creating, possessing, copying, or distributing (sharing) images of children and young people under the age of 18 which are of an indecent or sexual nature is illegal under the Protection of Children

Act 1978. Section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 criminalizes the possession of electronic or hardcopy images.

Under the Online Safety Act 2023, the bill has a zero-tolerance approach to protecting children, meaning social media platforms will be legally responsible for the content they host and keeping children and young people safe online.

Social media platforms will be expected to:

- remove illegal content quickly or prevent it from appearing in the first place, including content promoting self-harm.
- prevent children from accessing harmful and age-inappropriate content
- enforce age limits and age-checking measures.
- ensure the risks and dangers posed to children on the largest social media platforms are more transparent, including by publishing risk assessments.
- provide parents and children with clear and accessible ways to report problems online when they do arise.

Manipulation - Manipulation may include putting pressure on someone to reveal personal information or to arrange a physical meeting. This can be done by using online friendship status –, suggesting that a genuine friend would give out personal information/photographs. It can be difficult to negotiate online relationships – some people will find using ignoring and blocking tools easy, others will hesitate to demote the status of people they have already thought of as friends, and this may lead to feeling guilty or ashamed. Manipulation is also used by adults with a sexual interest in children to 'groom' children they have contacted online to meet up. If anyone suspects child exploitation or feels they are being groomed, please contact County Office and ask to speak to the designated safeguarding officer.

Targets and perpetrators

The anonymity and distance that technology provides means anyone can be the victim of cyber bullying. People who cyberbully do not need to be physically threatening to cyberbully.

Cyber bullying can be used by a person bullying offline to extend their aggression, but can equally be used as a form of 'revenge'. There have been some cases where the person cyber bullying had been previously bullied and used the technology to respond. Bystanders to cyber bullying can easily become perpetrators – by passing on or showing to others an image designed to humiliate another person.

Signs and Symptoms of bullying

A member may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Senior Members and Club Leaders should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a member:

- Doesn't want to go to the club/school or join in an activity.
- Changes their usual routine including spending increasing amounts of time online
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Feels ill at club meetings
- Seems to frequently receive distressing mobile phone or social media messages

- Becomes aggressive, disruptive, unreasonable, runs away or displays secretive behaviours
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but cyberbullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

NFYFC code of conduct

YFC Code of Conduct

This code of conduct sets out the behaviour expected by members, elected club officers, staff, volunteers and parents involved with Young Farmers' Clubs and should be considered in conjunction with other policies and guidance as prepared by the NFYFC or the County Federation

As a stakeholder of YFC, you should have fun safely and considerately by:

- **Acting within the law** at all times
- **Being non-judgemental and treating people equally and fairly** regardless of age, disability, gender (sex), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, socio-economic status or political belief
- **Looking after one another** and creating a positive environment that does not use or permit any form of peer pressure, discrimination or bullying.
- **Being respectful** of:
    - Each other and the opinions of others
    - Property and other peoples' possessions
- **Avoiding offending** others by refraining from language, behaviour or apparel with slogans that may reasonably be considered as offensive, insulting, discriminatory or abusive or otherwise inappropriate.
- **Conducting themselves** in a way that does not bring the reputation of YFC into question or disrepute.
- **Complying** with all Club, County and National Federation policies.
- **Reporting any concerns** about safeguarding, poor practice and/or conduct to an appropriate person.

YFC Parents/Guardians/Supporters

Parent/carer or other supporter of a YFC member should, in addition to the above:

- **Comply** with any reasonable requests to ensure the safety of your child
- **Provide up-to-date parental consents** as required
- **Ensure** appropriate arrangements are in place for the safe drop-off and collection of your child at YFC meetings, activities and events

Positions of Trust or Responsibility*

All staff and YFC members elected into office are in a position of trust/responsibility within the organisation, requiring that you behave in a way that would not put members or colleagues in danger of harm (including

- **Actively support** the objects and mission of YFC.
- **Participate in training** to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
- **Carry out the duties** and responsibilities of their elected role in good faith and with integrity, seeking help and assistance when required.
- **Be prepared to be held accountable** for their decisions.

emotional harm) or jeopardise the reputation of YFC. In YFC this applies to Club Officers, Leaders, Advisors, Trainers, and all other volunteers, including Presidents/Vices, Committee/Board members, etc.

In addition to the above, those in positions of trust or responsibility should:

- **Be transparent** and open about YFC business, maintaining confidentiality when required.
- **Declare any conflicts of interest.**
- **Uphold** the democratic principles of YFC.
- **Not knowingly misrepresent** the views of YFC.
- **Be familiar and compliant** with Charity Commission legislation, NFYFC policies and procedures, and any other relevant club and county policies.
- **Support and work collaboratively** with fellow club and county officers, county staff and NFYFC staff and officers.

This Code incorporates the Nolan principles** of standards in public life. It aims to ensure that all observe the highest standards of propriety and act in the best interests of the YFC community and the NFYFC at all times.

Remember

- To promote an ethos, which ensures respect for the individual including their mental health and wellbeing
- To develop a culture where victims can freely ask for help without stigma
- To help club officials recognise that swift action can prevent more serious situations arsing later
- To promote the understanding that vigilance by club officials is an important defence against cyber bullying
- To encourage clubs to take effective action and sanctions against cyber bullies and seek help or support when concerned for an individual member

Advice for YFYFC Members

- Do not leave a computer or smartphone logged in when you are not using them.
- Enabling a PIN or passcode is an important step to protect you from losing personal data and images (or having them copied and shared) from your smartphone if it is lost, stolen, or accessed by other members.
- Familiarise yourself with the privacy and security settings of the social media and apps you use and ensure they are kept up to date. If you are not sure what to do, ask a trusted adult.
- Be aware that your reputation could be harmed by what others share about you online, such as friends tagging you in inappropriate posts, photographs, or videos.
- Consider your own conduct online; certain behaviours could breach the law.
- Do not accept friend requests from people you do not know
- Do not give out personal contact details or share inappropriate photographs.

Responding to cyber bullying and YFYFC procedures

A member should never respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. They should report incidents appropriately and seek support from you're their parent/guardian, Club Leader, Officer Team or contact County Office/Designated Safeguarding Officer.

A member should save evidence of the abuse; take screen prints of messages or web pages and record the time and date they happened.

Where the perpetrator is known to be a member (under 18), the majority of cases can be dealt with most effectively through YFYFC disciplinary procedures.

Where the perpetrator is known to be an adult, in nearly all cases, the first action should be for the parent/guardian, Club Leader, Officer Team to report to County Office/Designated Safeguarding Officer. The Designated Safeguarding Officer will then invite the person either on the phone or at a face-to-face meeting to address their concerns and request that the person removes the offending comments.

If they refuse, the Designated Safeguarding Officer will decide what to do next – the matter may be reported to the social networking site if it breaches their terms, or seek guidance from the local authority, legal advisers, or support from other agencies for example, The UK Safer Internet Centre.

If the comments are threatening or abusive, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitute a hate crime, the member, their parent/guardian, or Designated Safeguarding Officer may consider contacting the local police. Online harassment is a crime.

If a criminal offence has occurred the police will be consulted. In the event of a sexual abuse allegation, the local safeguarding board will be contacted by the County Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Outcomes

Members who have been cyber bullied will be supported by:

- Reassuring the member and the club officials providing continuous support during meetings or activities.
- Working towards restoring self-esteem and confidence, the member should be encouraged to participate in events, activities, competitions, and socials.
- In a serious incident, the member maybe referred to the local Early Help team, Social Care or Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Service.

Members who have perpetrated the cyber bullying will be expected to:

- Redress any damage caused by the bully as soon as possible and the bully must take responsibility for their actions. (ie the bully(s) should be asked to genuinely apologise in a safe controlled environment).
- In serious cases, the bully may be banned following the YFYFC Arbitration Process.
- In a serious incident, the member maybe referred to the local Early Help team, Social Care or Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Service

Monitoring and review: putting policy into practice

- The Federation will ensure that they regularly monitor and evaluate mechanisms to ensure that the policy is being consistently applied.
- The County Chairman and Designated Safeguarding Officer will be informed of cyber bullying concerns and outcomes, as appropriate.

Further Information

Anti-Bullying Alliance	www.antibullying-alliance.org	
National Bullying Helpline	www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk	
Kidscape	www.kidscape.org.uk	
Childline	www.childline.org.uk	0800 1111
Young Minds	www.youngminds.org.uk	
Young Carers	www.youngcarers.net	
Mencap	www.mencap.org.uk	
Think U Know	www.thinkuknow.co.uk	
Stop Hate	www.stophateuk.org	
Stonewall	www.stonewall.org.uk	
Stalking	www.stalkinghelpline.org	
Crime Prosecution Service	https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/social-media-guidelines-prosecuting-cases-involving-communications-sent-social-media	

Guidelines for Dealing with Victims of Cyber Bullying

Remember to record all follow-up actions, following the guidelines laid down earlier.

Immediate Response

a Avoid high-pressured questioning of the victim as this may lead to further loss of self confidence.

b Make sure the person who is cyber bullied is supported and kept safe.

c Try to find out information by talking to the victim. Any Police investigation will retrieve the data however, ask the victim not to delete any messages, images or save screen shots.

d Reassure the victim that there is to be a determined effort to stop the cyber bullying. Block any mobile phone numbers that are causing distress.

e Depending on the circumstances, supervision of members may need to be tightened or reviewed especially if they have access to computers in village halls etc. Ensure the venue has an internet policy in place.

Possible Strategies

a Encourage the member to join in some supervised club activities, which are centred on developing a skill.

b Enlist the help of friends, perhaps involving them in some confidence building exercises.

c If the member is forgetful, untidy, clumsy; do comments made during Club activities in front of other members make the situation worse? If this is the case, the situation must be dealt with.

d Enlist the help of other club officials to help restore self-confidence e.g. engineer other group situations where the member can identify a sense of achievement and a sense of belonging.

e Older members can help. They can 'get alongside' mentor/support the person who is being cyber bullied.

f Help the member to develop self-protective strategies such as:

- stay with the group; to be alone is to be vulnerable
- always tell somebody, preferably a club officer
- spend less time online and more time joining in activities

g As the effects of cyber bullying are unlikely to be restricted to YFC activities, in most cases it may be necessary to widen the scope of discussion and advice in order to help restore confidence.

h Inform parents as appropriate; If the incident involves members under 18 years of age then parents should be informed of the situation to offer additional support in addressing the situation.

i If a member is harmed or at risk of harm, external authorities may be involved, such as the Early Help team, Social Care, Education Welfare Officer (in some local authorities) or Police.

j The YFC club should liaise with the County Chairman or Designated Safeguarding Officer at County Office to ensure any new trends of cyber bullying are identified early and best practice is shared.

Response

The immediate response must be to attempt to stop the cyber bullying, to ensure the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of those bullying and those observing the behaviour. If the cyber bully is not genuinely committed to change, the most appropriate response is:

a Make it clear that the behavior is unacceptable to everyone.

b Outline steps to be taken, contact parents as appropriate.

c Try to support the bully in changing his/her behaviour. Provide an opportunity for the bully to talk freely about the behavior in the context of change.

Criminal offence – for information

The Crown Prosecution Service has created a guide which sets four categories that prosecutors should review when making decisions in relation to whether a criminal offence has been committed.

1. Credible threats (to a person's life or safety or property)
2. Communications targeting specific individuals (including persistent harassment and ongoing abuse)
3. Breach of court orders (for example identifying people protected by law)
4. Communications which are grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, or false

Approved at the Executive Meeting on 25th April 2024

Signed: ……

Kirsty Chapple
Chairman of Executive Committee 2023 - 2025

Dated: ……

Review date: April 2027