

The Child Brain Injury Trust is a national charity supporting anyone affected by childhood acquired brain injury. The following information has been developed to help the reader understand more about brain injury and some of the associated issues. Every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. If you require more immediate support or assistance please contact our **Helpline 0303 3032248** or email [helpline@cbituk.org](mailto:helpline@cbituk.org) where we will be able to respond to your specific enquiry and or offer support.

## Bullying

Bullying is common. Approximately one-third of all children will experience it at some point<sup>i</sup>. Unfortunately children with disabilities (including acquired brain injury (ABI)) are at a much higher risk, with as many as 8 out of 10 children being affected.<sup>ii</sup> Often disabled people are targeted because they are seen as “different” and there is a lack of understanding about disability, particularly neurological disability.<sup>iii</sup> It could be that the bully is looking for a way to vent anger and frustrations - he/she will often have been bullied him/herself, either at school or at home - or to attract admiration from peers. However it is important that your child understands that bullying is always wrong.

### Common forms of bullying include

- Stealing or damaging belongings
- Name calling
- Physical harm
- Spreading rumours
- Threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Sending offensive and hurtful text messages or e-mails
- Small actions repeated over a long time, such as tripping someone up, or brushing past their desk so their pencils fall to the floor



With the advances in technology there is also the issues around **Cyberbullying** to consider.

### What is cyberbullying?

Examples of cyberbullying include:

- Emailing or texting threatening or nasty messages to people
- Posting an embarrassing or humiliating video of someone
- Harassing someone by repeatedly sending texts or instant messages
- Setting up profiles on social networking sites, such as Facebook, to make fun of someone
- "Happy slapping" – when people use their mobiles to film and share videos of physical attacks
- Posting or forwarding someone else's personal or private information or images without their permission
- Sending viruses that can damage another person's computer
- Making abusive comments about another user on a gaming site

Being bullied can have a wide variety of detrimental effects on a child, including: low self-esteem and self-worth, being isolated from their peer group, and challenging behaviour.<sup>iv</sup> Your child may find it helpful to know that it is normal for those being bullied to feel frightened, depressed, upset or isolated. If your child is being bullied it may be hard for them to talk about it, either because they do not want to tell tales or because they fear what may happen if teachers confront the bullies. Your child may also feel that being bullied is embarrassing because they feel they have “failed” or that talking about it will make others think they are weak. However there are signs to show that your child is being bullied.

### **Signs to look out for that might suggest your child is being bullied include<sup>v</sup>**

- Becoming withdrawn and losing interest in activities they previously enjoyed
- Coming home with bruises, marks or cuts
- Losing belongings
- Showing reluctance to go to school or activity groups
- Wanting to change their journey or time of their journey to school
- Declining performance at school
- Changes in their mood, perhaps becoming depressed or angry
- Changes in their behaviour, for example starting to wet the bed
- Being aggressive with family or friends
- Difficulties sleeping
- Feeling anxious
- Repeated headaches or stomach aches before school time

The person being bullied may feel that they will make the situation worse by talking about it but the only real way to stand up to bullying is to tell someone. The person to be told needs to be someone that your child likes, can trust and is likely to want to sort out the problem. Schools, for example, have policies on bullying and it is the duty of every member of staff to address bullying when it becomes an issue.

Teachers should be aware of the ways in which bullying can be dealt with. Other organisations that can support your child include:

Bullying UK (0808 800 2222) [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

Kidscape (08451 205 204) [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

Stoptextbully (A website that deals with the issue of bullying via text messages, photos, telephone calls, emails and chat rooms) [www.stoptextbully.com](http://www.stoptextbully.com)

ChildLine (0800 1111 - free phone) <https://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Bullying/Pages/Bullyinginfo.aspx>

The Department for Education and Skills (A useful website on how to tackle bullying for students, families and teachers) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>



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<sup>i</sup> Cawson, P. et al. (2000) [Child maltreatment in the United Kingdom: a study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect](#). London: NSPCC. p.26.

<sup>ii</sup> Thompson, Whitney, Smith (1994). Bullying of children with special needs in mainstream schools. *British Journal of Learning Support*. [Volume 9, Issue 3](#), pages 103–106.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.bullying.co.uk/advice/disability>

<sup>iv</sup> Flynt and Morgan (2004). Bullying and children with disabilities. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*.

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.bullying.co.uk/advice/spotting-signs-bullying>