

The No Blame Approach (Appendix 1)

When bullying has been observed or reported then the No Blame approach offers a simple seven-step procedure which can be used by a member of staff (facilitator). Note that each step has been carefully planned as a single part of the whole and variations may undermine the success of the method. The steps are summarised below.

Step 1 – talk with the victim

When the facilitator finds out that bullying has happened, she/he starts by talking to the victim. During this conversation the listener encourages the victim to describe how they feel with reflective comments such as, “That must be very hard for you... so you have felt really upset”.

The purpose is not to discover factual evidence about this or other events; if the victim wants to include evidence in the account this is always reframed to establish the resulting distress. For example a comment like, “They have all been ignoring me, nobody will talk to me,” might be replied to with a response like, “so you felt really lonely and you were upset that you had nobody to talk to.”

It is important that the victim understands and gives consent to the process. Sometimes there may be a fear that it could lead to further victimisation but when the non-punitive aspect is fully explained the victim usually feels safe, and relieved that something is being done. He/she may want the perpetrators to understand how much distress has been caused. Talking to someone else who has been through the experience might give further reassurance. The facilitator should end the meeting by:

- Checking that nothing confidential has been discussed which should not be disclosed to the other people involved.
- Asking the victim to suggest the names of those involved, some colluders or observers and some friends who will make up the group
- Inviting the victim to produce a piece of writing or a picture which will illustrate his/her unhappiness
- Offering the victim an opportunity to talk again at any time during the procedure if things are not going well.

The victim is not invited to join the group to present his/her account as it is possible that he/she will make accusations, provoke denial or justification and undermine the problem-solving approach.

Step 2 – convene a meeting with the people involved

The facilitator arranges to meet with the group of pupils who have been involved or suggested by the victim. A group of six to eight works well. This is an opportunity for the facilitator to use his/her judgement to balance the group so that helpful and reliable young people are included alongside those whose behaviour has been causing distress. The aim is to use the strengths of group members to bring about the best outcome.