

**Countering Bully/victim Problems in Schools: Supporting the Guidance Counsellor.**

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## Summary

The purpose of the current chapter is to equip Guidance Counsellors with the requisite classic and contemporary knowledge to understand and plan to address the many manifestations of bully/victim problems encountered among students and the wider school community (e.g., Mc Guckin & Lewis, 2003). Whilst attention is directed towards an exploration of what we currently know about the nature, incidence, correlates, and management of traditional ‘f2f’ (face-to-face) bullying (Mc Guckin, Cummins, & Lewis, 2010), the chapter also explores a more immediate and contemporary form of bullying, one that demonstrates an overlap with the experience of being involved in f2f forms of bully/victim problems – cyberbullying (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Drawing upon the research outcomes of recent and ongoing EU commissioned research projects (e.g., COST Action IS0801, CyberTraining, CyberTraining 4 Parents), the chapter dispels some of the myths about cyberbullying and provides timely resources and reference materials for immediate use by Guidance Counsellors in their work with students, parents, and other professionals. Whilst much attention is justifiably directed towards f2f and cyberbullying, the chapter also presents a timely reminder to be vigilant against other forms of bully/victim problems, such as, disablist bullying (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2011) and alterophobia (Minton, 2012). Finally, due consideration is given to the policy and legal context of such issues, with directions towards appropriate additional resources in order to facilitate readers’ engagement with the current knowledge regarding bully/victim problems. The aspiration is to work towards more harmonious educational environments, ones that see students reach their full potential with protection from harm and deleterious health effects.

## Key words

Guidance Counsellor, bullying, cyberbullying, schools, students, support.

## What is Bullying?

Bullying can be considered a form of aggression which has a social context, in that it generally occurs among social groups who share regular contact (Björkqvist, Ekman, & Lagerspetz, 1982). Bullying has been defined in many different ways by theorists and researchers, but in Irish education, we are guided by the definition provided by the then Department of Education (DE, 1993), which defines bullying as:

“... repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.” (p. 2)

It is widely agreed among researchers (Olweus, 1993, 1997; O’Moore & Minton, 2004; Rigby, 2002) that there are three main criteria for identifying bullying behaviour:

1. Repetition of the behaviour;
2. A power imbalance between the bully(ies) and victim(s);
3. Intention to do harm.

However, O’Moore and Minton (2004) suggest an exception to these criteria, whereby repetition of the bullying behaviour is not always necessary. They argue that one particularly severe incident of bullying can lead to an ongoing sense of intimidation.

Following the transformative effects of widespread access to Information and Communication Technologies, we must now make a distinction between traditional or f2f bullying (Mc Guckin, Cummins, & Lewis, 2010) and cyberbullying. Cyber communication brings a host of different aspects to bully/victim problems, such as the potential for a very large audience to witness the bullying content (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatson, 2008), and therefore requires a different definition. Although a consensus has yet to be reached regarding the definition of cyberbullying, Smith et al.’s (2008) early definition remains close to the criteria for traditional bullying, defining cyberbullying in the following way:

“... An aggressive intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. ” (p. 376)

Whilst, traditional bullying can be broadly categorised as physical, verbal, and social or relational (Galen & Underwood, 1997; O’Moore & Minton, 2004; Rigby, 2002; Smith et al., 2008; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009), cyberbullying can be categorised either by the medium used to attack the victims, such as website or text message (Smith et al., 2008), or by the type of behaviour exhibited by the bully, such as impersonation or denigration (Willard, 2007).

Other forms of bullying include: alterophobic bullying; disablist bullying; sexual bullying; and racial bullying. Alterophobic bullying (Minton, 2012) is that which stems from alterophobia, or prejudice against individuals who are part of an alternative sub-culture (e.g., Goth culture). Disablist bullying (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2011) refers to bullying which is “... hurtful, insulting or intimidating behaviour related to a perceived or actual disability” (Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum: NIABF, 2010). In the UK, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) define sexual bullying as “Any bullying

behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, that is based on a person’s sexuality or gender. It is when sexuality or gender is used as a weapon by boys or girls towards other boys or girls – although it is more commonly directed at girls. It can be carried out to a person’s face, behind their back or through the use of technology.” Sexual bullying includes behaviours such as putting someone down about their sex life, making fun of someone for being homosexual, using sexual words to hurt somebody, or spreading rumours about a person’s sexuality or sex life. Racial bullying refers to behaviours such as using racial slurs, graffiti, making fun of someone’s culture, or making gestures which are offensive (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

From this review, it is evident how vital it is that Guidance Counsellors are familiar with the different types of bullying behaviour and that all forms of bullying are addressed, in terms of designing policy collaboratively, creating high standards of practice amongst the school community, and taking appropriate and consistent action when needed. The following section will discuss the prevalence and effects of bullying, thus illustrating the great need for bully/victim problems to be addressed in every Irish school.

### How Many are Involved in Bully/Victim Problems?

In Ireland, there has been a wealth of robust research conducted over the past 25 years in relation to bully/victim problems. Table 1 presents the findings of a nationwide study of bully/victim problems in Ireland among primary (n = 9,599) and post-primary school students (n = 10,843) aged between eight and 18 years (O’Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997). It is evident from these prevalence findings that traditional bullying appears to decline at post-primary level. However, a substantial number of children reported involvement in bully/victim problems at both levels. In addition to the findings presented in Table 1, O’Moore et al. (1997) reported that approximately one fifth of primary school children and one in ten post-primary school children had been victimized during the previous five days.

**Table 1.** Prevalence and frequency of traditional bully/victim problems among Irish school pupils (O’Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997).

	Victimized during previous term			Bullied others during previous term		
	Once or twice %	Sometimes %	Once a week or more often %	Once or twice %	Sometimes %	Once a week or more often %
Primary School	18.6	8.4	4.3	19.9	5.1	1.4
Post-primary School	10.8	2.9	1.9	11.5	2.4	<1

More recently, O’Moore and Minton (2009) conducted research to examine the experience of traditional and cyber bully/victim problems among 2,794 post-primary students (see Table 2). They found that, in relation to general bullying (both traditional and cyber), around one-in-five students reported that they had been victimized once or twice in the past couple of months, whereas less than one-in-ten had suffered more frequent victimization. Additionally, around one-in-five had bullied others once or twice, and around one-in-twenty had bullied others more frequently. In relation to cyberbullying specifically, O’Moore and Minton (2009) found that around one-in-ten reported that they were victimized once or twice, and very few reported that they had been victimized more frequently. Similarly those who reported cyberbullying others constituted a small minority of the sample. Overall, around one third of students (30.2%) had been victimized at school, whilst half as many students (14.2%) had been cyber victimized. The most common methods of cyberbullying reported by the sample of students included: abusive text messages; nasty pictures or video clips; abusive phone calls; and abuse on social networking sites. Both studies (O’Moore et al., 1997, O’Moore & Minton, 2009) evidence the significant numbers of Irish schoolchildren who are involved in bully/victim problems. Indeed, O’Moore and Minton (2009) have shown that after twelve years, traditional bully/victim problems have remained relatively prevalent, and in fact cyberbullying clearly accounts for a rise in general bully/victim problems during this time.

**Table 2.** Prevalence and frequency of cyber bully/victim problems among Irish school pupils (O’Moore & Minton, 2009).

General bully/victim problems in past couple of months (includes cyberbullying)				Cyberbullying specifically in last couple of months			
Victimized		Bullied others		Victimized		Bullied others	
Once or twice %	More often %	Once or twice %	More often %	Once or twice %	More often %	Once or twice %	More often %
21.7	8.5	19.7	5.2	11.4	2.8	7.1	1.6

### Types and Effects of Bullying

Much of the literature suggests that males report greater involvement in bullying, both as victims and bullies (Alsaker & Brunner, 1999; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Furthermore, with regard to types of bullying there is overwhelming evidence that males show greater involvement in physical bullying whilst females are more involved in social or relational bullying (Fonzi, et al., 1999; O’Moore, Kirkham, & Smith, 1997; Smith & Shu, 2000). However, there is little clarity regarding the sex-related differences in cyberbullying, with

some researchers finding a greater prevalence of cyberbullying perpetration among males (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; O'Moore, 2012) and greater levels of victimization among females (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; O'Moore, 2012; Smith et al., 2008). Further research is clearly required to gain a deeper understanding of this aspect of cyberbullying.

There is a wealth of evidence regarding the potential effects of traditional bullying for those involved as bullies, victims, and bully-victims (i.e., those who both bully others and are victimized). Whilst traditional bullies may or may not gain from their behaviour in the short-term, they have been linked to long-term negative outcomes, such as:

- Delinquency (Farrington, Loeber, Stallings, & Ttofi, 2011);
- Mental health / adjustment difficulties (Gibb, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2011).

Traditional victimization has been associated with:

- Low self-esteem (Corcoran, Connolly, & O'Moore, 2012; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001);
- Depression (Hawker & Boulton, 2000);
- Suicidal ideation (Mills, Guerin, Lynch, Daly, & Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Traditional bully-victims have been found to have the worst outcomes in terms of adjustment and psychological well-being (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). Involvement in bully/victim problems has also been linked to low scholastic achievement (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005), highlighting the importance of an effective school response.

Given its recent evolution, relatively less is known about the impact of involvement in cyberbullying. However, research to date has indicated that cyber victimization is associated with:

- Lower self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010);
- Increased depression (Gradinger, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2009; Machmutow, Perren, Sticca, & Alsaker, 2012);
- Increased self-harm and suicidal ideation (Hay & Meldrum, 2010).

It is evident that all forms of bullying and victimization carry a potential risk to those involved. However, the impact of bully/victim problems on academic attainment and health and well-being should motivate Guidance Counsellors to ensure that effective school policy procedures are in place to combat such behaviour.

## **Policy and Legislation**

### **Bullying Policy in Ireland**

'Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011' was developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2011) in order to guide organisations with regard to child protection. Specifically, the publication gives direction regarding what needs to be done to protect children, how these actions should be carried out,

and who is responsible for these actions in each organisation. Section 9.4 of the document deals with child protection with respect to bullying, and provides an explanation of different forms of bullying. Whilst school management boards are identified as having a responsibility to implement a policy which deals with bullying and to ensure that teachers are aware of this policy and of the relevant procedures, it is also stated that the HSE Children and Family Services should be consulted when a bullying incident is particularly severe. School authorities are also directed to have regard for the existing advice and the Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-primary Schools (DE, 1993).

These Guidelines (DE, 1993) offer school management directives regarding the definition, types, and effects of bullying. They also provide guidance on the possible signs, symptoms, and characteristics of bully/victim problems, whilst also offering guidance regarding prevention of bullying, and creation of school policy. The guidelines emphasise the importance of adopting a Whole School Approach (WSA) to countering bully/victim problems in schools. Specifically, school management are urged to draw up school policy "... after consultation with all the interests involved, i.e., teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians. It is necessary that the school policy should have general acceptance by the partners in the education of the pupils. In that way, it can be effective both from the point-of-view of preventing as well as dealing with bullying behaviour." (DE, 1993, p. 12).

In terms of developing a school anti-bullying policy, it is recommended by the DE (1993) that the following elements are included:

- A positive school ethos with a focus on respecting the individual;
- Awareness raising that bullying is considered to be an unacceptable behaviour among school management, teachers, pupils, and parents / guardians; implementation of supervision and monitoring to counter bullying across all areas of school activity with assistance from students;
- Design of procedures for noting and reporting bully/victim problems as an integral part of the school Code of Behaviour and Discipline;
- Provision of support for victims, bullies, and peers, including counselling;
- Inclusion of local agencies in combating bullying as a form of anti-social behaviour as it is desirable to involve the extended school community beyond the school grounds;
- Ongoing review and evaluation of the effectiveness of school anti-bullying policy to assess the prevalence and types of bullying within the school.

Although these guidelines were issued in 1993, they are still relevant and should be interpreted in the context of current circumstances and knowledge, with a focus on the development of a strong school ethos which not only opposes bullying, but fosters a sense of kindness and community among staff and students. With the purpose of combating bully/victim problems, an Anti-Bullying Forum took place on May 17<sup>th</sup> 2012 at the Department of Education and Skills (in conjunction with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs), in order to allow interested parties (experts, support groups, representatives of the schools sector including parents and students) to explore different approaches to address bullying in schools. In addition to the Forum, the Minister for Education established an Anti-Bullying Working Group with the remit to update the 1993 Guidelines, with a specific focus on tackling homophobic bullying, cyberbullying, and racial bullying. The findings of the Working Group (Action Plan on Bullying: Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2013) were adopted and published in January 2013. The 'implementation' phase of the Action Plan is now in progress, with an initial provision of €500,000 (for 2013) to support the work and priorities identified in the Action Plan.



The Action Plan identified 12 wide ranging and ambitious actions:

1. Immediately begin development of new national anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools to include an anti-bullying policy template and a template for recording incidents of bullying in schools. The working group have suggested that these new procedures be developed in consultation with the Education Partners and be ready by September 2013. These would replace the existing 1993 guidelines and 2006 policy template issued by the Department of Education and Skills;
2. A review of Teacher Education Support Service provision to identify training needs and to support the provision of an appropriate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) response;
3. Coordinated training and resource development for boards of management and parents;
4. Existing models for evaluating SPHE and for whole school evaluations (WSEs) should be adapted by amending questionnaires and by other means to include more evidence gathering concerning the effectiveness of the school's actions to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying;
5. A thematic Evaluation of Bullying in Schools to be carried out by the Schools Inspectorate;
6. As part of School Self Evaluation, schools should be supported in self-evaluating their effectiveness in creating a positive school culture and in preventing and tackling bullying;
7. Establishment of a new national anti-bullying website;
8. Department of Education and Skills to support the BeLong To *Stand Up Awareness* Week Against Homophobic Bullying;
9. Support for a media campaign focused on cyber bullying and specifically targeted at young people as part of Safer Internet Day 2013;
10. Research on effective supports for children with special educational needs to be conducted by the National Disability Authority;
11. Research on prevalence and impact of bullying linked to social media on the mental health and suicidal behaviour among young people to be facilitated by the National Suicide Prevention Office;
12. Awareness raising measures, including guidelines on all types and forms of bullying, for policy makers and other staff in state agencies who work in the schools sector.

From a brief perusal of these 12 actions, and the ongoing implementation of the Action Plan, it becomes evident that Guidance Counsellors should read the Action Plan in tandem with this chapter, and demonstrate their leadership qualities by ensuring that school anti-bullying measures and practices are robust and appropriate.

Also published by the Department of Education and Skills in January 2013, and inextricably linked to the issue of bully/victim problems, were national guidelines on promoting positive mental health and suicide prevention in post-primary schools (Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools. Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention: DES, 2013). As with bully/victim problems, these new Guidelines envisage mental health and suicide prevention as a Whole School Activity, with everyone in the school community having a role to play, with support being provided on a continuum: Support For All, Support for Some, and Support for a Few. Again, the pivotal and influential leadership role of the Guidance Counsellor is vital in the communication and implementation of these Guidelines and their link to anti-bullying policies and procedures.

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a framework that supports cooperation among scientists and researchers across Europe. A recent output of COST Action IS0801 'Cyberbullying: Coping with negative and enhancing positive uses of new technologies, in relationships in educational settings' (<https://sites.google.com/site/costis0801>), was the publication of 'Guidelines for preventing cyber-bullying in the school environment: A review and recommendations' (Almeida et al., 2012). This publication resulted from the critical analysis of 54 national guidelines from 27 countries relating to coping with cyberbullying. Guidelines were assessed in relation to their target groups, namely parents, young people, schools, and teachers. A number of conclusions were presented based on this review:

- There is a vital need for a collaborative effort from society, schools, teachers, parents, and young people to determine policy and practice, and it is of particular importance that young people feel that their voices are heard in these matters which affect them;
- Cyberbullying must be included in a whole school community approach to bullying, which empowers students to report victimization to seek help either for themselves or their peers;
- Education regarding staying safe in cyberspace, responding effectively when faced with aggression, and improving online social skills are necessary for young people;
- Both parents and teachers must take responsibility in dealing with abusive behaviour in cyberspace and must offer support for those victimized;
- It is important that teachers receive training both in pre-service and professional development training with regard to group dynamics and conflict management;
- The important role of parents is recognised with the suggestion that parents familiarise themselves with the Internet and associated risks, and that they encourage regular communication with their children in relation to cyber activities.

COST Action IS0801, has been, thus far, the most important gathering of world experts, including Irish experts, in the area of bully/victim problems, Internet safety, and other factors associated with the emerging issue of cyberbullying. Other outputs from the work of the Action are now becoming available (e.g., coping with cyberbullying: Perren et al., 2012a,b).

## How Irish Law Relates to Bullying

Smith (in press) has examined how Irish legislation relates to school bullying and asserts that “While the law does not deal explicitly with ‘school bullying’, the words not being mentioned, it does impose obligations on schools and those running them to, first, deal with bullying in terms of putting adequate policies and procedures in place to deter such behaviour, and acting properly and promptly to deal with it when it does happen; and second, when dealing with such behaviour, to act according to fair procedures.” (p. 1). Although there is no law which specifically addresses bullying in school, a number of criminal and civil laws can be applied to instances of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, both in criminal law, such as:

- The Post Office Amendment Act (1951);
- The Criminal Damage Act (1991);
- The Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act (1997);
- The Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act (2001);
- The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005).

and in Civil law, such as:

- The Education Act (1998);
- The Education (Welfare) Act (2000);
- The Equal Status Act (2000-2008);
- The Defamation Act (2009).

Smith (in press) indicates the relevance of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), as Section 23 requires a school Board of Management to prepare a ‘code of behaviour’ which should be in accordance with the directives of the National Education Welfare Board ([http://www.newb.ie/downloads/pdf/guidelines\\_school\\_codes\\_eng.pdf](http://www.newb.ie/downloads/pdf/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf)), which stipulate that the Board of Management of a school must implement policies in order to prevent or address bullying and harassment. Whilst it is not an easy task for schools to combat bully/victim problems successfully, there are a number of useful resources which can inform their methods.

Purdy and Mc Guckin (in press) have presented a timely review of the policy and legislative issues regarding cyberbullying for educators in Ireland, North and South, alongside new research exploring how schools are managing issues relating to the emergence of cyberbullying.

## Resources: Bullying and Cyberbullying

The current section provides a review of resources and outputs from projects which have been developed in order to facilitate those trying to combat bullying, including school staff and parents. Although bullying still affects schoolchildren throughout Ireland, there have been attempts to reduce bully/victim problems in relation to both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, and these attempts have taken the form of broad school-based programmes, such as The Donegal Primary School Anti-Bullying Programme, as well as efforts at an individual level, such as the CyberTraining4Parents Project.

## A Whole School Approach

The notion of a Whole School Approach is not a new concept to the practising Guidance Counsellor who strives to revise and update their 'live' Whole School Guidance Plan (DES, 2005) in accordance with the latest policy and evidence informed research and practice. Ecological theories, such as that proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) become useful tools in this regard (see Mc Guckin & Minton, in press). As previously mentioned, the new Action Plan on Bullying, and the new guidelines on promoting positive mental health and suicide prevention in post-primary schools, both reiterate the imperative for a Whole School Approach.

Many anti-bullying initiatives are built upon the core philosophy of the Whole School Approach: "... predicated on the assumption that bullying is a systemic problem, and, by implication, an intervention must be directed at the entire school context rather than just at individual bullies and victims." (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004, p. 548).

With regard to implementing and testing the effectiveness of a whole school anti-bullying programme, Minton and O'Moore (2008) designed and tested The Donegal Primary Schools Anti-Bullying Programme. The programme contained four main components:

1. A network of professionals who are trained to implement the anti-bullying programme in participating schools;
2. Resources for teachers and in-service training provided by the trainers;
3. Resources and information for parents and other members of the community provided by trainers;
4. Trainers taking a consultancy role for the duration of the programme in the participating schools.

Eleven trainers were educated in relation to:

- Definitions of bullying;
- Common characteristics of bullies and victims;
- Possible indications of bullying or victimization;
- The negative impact of bullying;
- WSA to counter bullying;
- Intervention methods;
- Dealing with parents;
- Presentation skills.

The Donegal Primary Schools Anti-Bullying Programme was carried out between 1998 and 2000, and a total of 42 primary schools participated in the programme. The programme was successful in decreasing both bullying behaviour and victimization prevalence rates, as evidenced by pre- and post-programme testing (O'Moore & Minton, 2005).

## Cool Schools

The Cool School Programme

([http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find\\_a\\_Service/Children\\_and\\_Family\\_Services/Child\\_and\\_Adolescent\\_Health/Coolschoolbullyfree/What%20we%20do%20for%20teachers.html](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/Children_and_Family_Services/Child_and_Adolescent_Health/Coolschoolbullyfree/What%20we%20do%20for%20teachers.html)) attempts to tackle bullying in post-primary schools and was initiated by Health Service

Executive Dublin North East's Child Psychiatric service with the support of the Department of Education and Science. The programme was created to assist schools in combating bullying effectively, and useful booklets are available provided on the website (<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/Cool%20School%20Bully%20Free%20Project%20Booklets.html>). The Cool School Programme takes its lead from the Guidelines issued by the DE (1993) and programmes which have been found to be effective. The main aims of the programme are to:

- Support the implementation of a whole school policy;
- Provide training materials for teachers, parents, and the classroom;
- Provide therapeutic groups for victims of bullying;
- Develop of an assessment tool for those who bully others.

### Checkpoints

In the UK, Varnava (2005) introduced the Checkpoints programme to counter violence in schools. Its main purpose is to improve children's behaviour in school, thus increasing their learning potential. Checkpoints takes a Whole School Approach (WSA), targeting school staff (Checkpoints for Schools), children (Checkpoints for Young People), and parents (Checkpoints for Parents). The programme is aimed at primary and secondary schools but is suggested as particularly worthwhile among students transferring to secondary school. Checkpoints is intended to raise awareness, to facilitate school self-audit, to offer guidance, and to provide an adaptable model which schools can use.

As a useful and straightforward tool in relation to WSA, Guidance Counsellors can easily and quickly utilise the Checkpoints materials to self-audit their school community and identify areas of particular strength and areas that still require attention. Further, and associated self-directed readings can be easily accessed from the Violence in Schools Training Action (VISTA: <http://www.vista-europe.org>) programme.

### VISTA: Violence in Schools Training Action

The Violence in Schools Training Action (VISTA: <http://www.vista-europe.org>) also proposes a WSA to countering violence in schools. The VISTA initiative provides training resources for teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and policy-makers. At the foundation of VISTA is a belief that schools can make an impact by sustaining violent attitudes, or by creating an environment which fosters an anti-violence approach. The WSA is recommended by VISTA (2006) because it is argued that "... the phenomenon of school violence is best addressed as a collective challenge, and not as a problem rooted in the individual. From this perspective, a WSA involves as many actors as possible including children and young people, teachers, school management, non-teaching staff members, parents, governors, the local community, external organisations and wider society as a whole." (p. 4). There are five modules covered by VISTA, centred on the themes of:

1. Definitions, Context and Knowledge of School Violence;
2. The WSA to School Violence;
3. Responsibilities and Rights;
4. Managing and Evaluating Change;
5. Preventative and Integrative Practice.

## The Erris Anti-Bullying Initiative

Advancing the WSA is The Erris Anti-Bullying Initiative (EABI: <http://www.iorraslecheile.ie/eabi.html>), a collaborative effort between Iorras Le Chéile Community Development Project and Dr Stephen Minton (School of Education, Trinity College Dublin) to combat bullying at a whole-community level. This initiative is unique in that it is based on the principles of community development, involving schools, clubs, and organisations.

## Combating Cyberbullying

A number of recent European initiatives have been instigated in an effort to combat victimization in schools. For instance, embracing new technologies for the purposes of cross-national collaboration, the Anti-Violence-Campus at Second Life (ACV@SL: <http://www.antiviolencecampus.org/>) aims at addressing the issue of school bullying, violence, discrimination, and xenophobia, through provision of a virtual environment which assists learning and collaboration. For example, the campus facilitates courses, seminars, workshops, film displays, and exhibitions as well as providing access to relevant information and discussion with experts. Guidance Counsellors may see the advanced nature of this project as a useful means of engaging with the ‘always on’ generation (Belsey, 2004), who may enjoy the contemporary aspect of the medium use to deliver the resources, message, and learning outcomes.

At the EU level, recent initiatives have focused particularly on cyberbullying as this form of bullying is proving particularly challenging for children, educators, parents, and policy-makers. The CyberTraining Project ([www.cybertraining-project.org](http://www.cybertraining-project.org)) provides an online (free) manual for trainers/teachers in relation to countering cyberbullying. The materials are based on the results of needs analyses conducted across partner countries (including Ireland), the perspectives of relevant experts, and assessment of the current ‘situation’ in the partner countries reflecting research and intervention efforts to combat cyberbullying (review chapters regarding the situation in Ireland are freely available). The ‘trainers’ targeted in this project refer to a broad array of professionals with the potential for providing training on this issue, including Guidance Counsellors. The Manual contains seven modules:

1. Introduction to the training manual - principles and strategies;
2. Introduction to ICT;
3. Introduction to cyberbullying;
4. Tackling cyberbullying: Approaches in Europe;
5. Working with parents;
6. Working with schools;
7. Working with young people.

CyberTraining4Parents (CT4P: [www.cybertraining4parents.org](http://www.cybertraining4parents.org)) is a follow-on project which has a more narrow focus than the CyberTraining Project as it is aimed at parents and trainers of parents specifically, and covers three aspects of training, including:

1. Introduction to new media;
2. Introduction to cyberbullying;
3. How parents can detect, intervene and prevent cyberbullying.

An additional module for trainers provides guidance on training techniques when working with parents: ‘Working with parents: Principles and strategies for training’. The project had a number of outputs including face-to-face training for trainers of parents, an online moderated course for trainers, a self-directed online course for parents, and an e-book (<http://www.cybertraining4parents.org/ebook/>).

The ‘COST Action IS0801 Cyberbullying: Coping with negative and enhancing positive uses of new technologies, in relationships in educational settings’ (<https://sites.google.com/site/costis0801/>) is an EU supported initiative involving 28 participating countries, and two external countries, namely Australia and Ukraine (as well as input from colleagues in Australia and the US). The Action has recently ended and through the collaborative work and shared expertise regarding cyberbullying in educational settings, has achieved the main goal of producing guidelines which are applicable in Europe. The Action contained six working groups and important aspects of collaborative work included:

- Definitional and measurement aspects of cyberbullying;
- Input from outside the research community (i.e., legal experts, mobile phone companies, and Internet service providers);
- Existing national guidelines and recommendations for coping strategies across different countries;
- Sharing of research regarding coping strategies for dealing with cyberbullying;
- Positive uses of new technology in educational settings.

This initiative has resulted in a number of publications which can be found on the website. Specifically, each of these EU aided projects has involved Irish researchers with extensive expertise in the area.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

It is evident that bullying in all of its forms still presents a significant problem for Irish schoolchildren with related risks for educational attainment and well-being. It is quite apparent that there is very productive ongoing work to counter bully/victim problems, in Ireland and internationally. Whilst there is no legislation pertaining to school-based bullying specifically, there is an onus on schools to address the issue. The Whole School Approach is a core aspect of the various attempts to counter bullying, and “The role of the Guidance Counsellor must remain central to this whole school approach because of the specific and unique nature of their training and counselling skills.” (Flynn, 2012, p. 7). Whilst there is much work to be done in relation to preventing and countering bullying in schools, Guidance Counsellors are in a central position to lead school communities in this work.

## Biography

Conor Mc Guckin

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Conor Mc Guckin is a Chartered (British Psychological Society: CPsychol) and Registered (Psychological Society of Ireland: Reg. Psychol., Ps.S.I.) Psychologist, and is a Chartered Scientist (CSci) with The Science Council. Conor is the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in the School of Education at Trinity College Dublin. As part of the School's Inclusion in Education and Society (IES) research grouping, Conor's research interests relate to the areas of psychology applied to educational policy and processes, psychology of education, bully/victim problems among children and adults, special educational needs, psychometrics and testing, religiosity, and bereavement.

Lucie Corcoran

Current position: PhD Candidate, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

Lucie Corcoran completed a BA in Psychology at University College Dublin in 2006 and has since specialised in research on bully/victim problems in Irish schools with a particular focus on cyberbullying. Lucie completed a MA at the Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire with research focusing on self-esteem and personality in relation to traditional and cyber bully/victim problems. She is currently finalising PhD research at Trinity College Dublin relating to coping strategies for cyberbullying.



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