

## MAKE OUR HOSPITAL A BULLY FREE ZONE



Roving Reporters Ryan and George from Sixmile Patients Council interview staff and patients to get their views on bullying

Six Mile Patient Council decided to do a report to raise awareness of bullying, to find out how this type of behaviour affects patients and staff and, most of all, to find out what we can all do to stop it if it happens.

Rhona Brennan, who has recently taken over Sixmile Ward explained that sometimes patients do not recognise what bullying is. At times it can be difficult for staff because, while they are there to observe the patients, there is a balance between supervising and having respect for patients' privacy. Patients are entitled to have private conversations, so staff have to balance giving patients space and keeping everyone safe. Rhona explained that she is proud of the staff because they all have the patients' needs at heart, they demonstrate a good knowledge of safeguarding, and they know how to recognise abuse and nurture a positive culture on the ward.

Roving Reporter Ryan, asked if patients ever bully staff. Rhona said, "Yes it does happen, but there is a zero tolerance policy which supports staff because, even though a patient may display inappropriate behaviour that may or may not be related to their learning disability, it does not make it acceptable for staff to be physically or verbally abused."

Roving reporters Ryan and George also interviewed other staff members. They all said they were affected if they saw patients being bullied, and, though they all followed the correct procedure to report and deal with the bullying, it's still upsetting.

One member of staff said sometimes patients reprimand their peers about their behaviour without realising that their own behaviour can also be inappropriate.

Some staff stated they had experienced difficult issues with other colleagues, which highlighted that bullying can happen to anyone, anywhere. One member of staff explained that people are different and when a lot of people are together, personalities can clash. The important thing that can help here is that there are line managers who you can go to for support, because feeling bullied is extremely stressful. It is important to try and have awareness of others, of different personalities and to be tolerant to difference.

Staff said that patients sometimes witness other patients verbally abusing staff, and this upsets some of the patients, which sometimes results in the patients trying to stand up for the staff. The staff all said they really appreciate that the patients are trying to protect them, but it is better to allow staff to deal with the issues as

they are trained to do so, and other patients getting involved can cause the problem to continue for longer. They also said that staff try to help the patients prepare for moving into the community so they can have the life they deserve and keeping yourself safe is part of this.

Patients talked about their different experiences of bullying. One patient said that as a result of bullying they had considered suicide, however they have learned better coping strategies and find it much easier now to talk to friends and staff to get the support they need.

Other patients explained that it is important to have true friends that you can talk to and trust. Patients felt that it is important to try not to judge other people and try to get on with everyone, because we are all human beings.

Patients also recognised that sometimes, when they were stressed or agitated, arguments could start over very small things, so it is important to try and not let things upset you. Sometimes you just need to go to your room and play some music to help relieve your stress or control your anger.

To make sure patients are aware of what bullying is and that they know what to do if they need help, we are going to help everyone learn how to be bullying aware:

### **What is Bullying?**



Sometimes, we may see certain behaviours as bullying, but if they're not deliberate or repetitive then they may not be bullying; they may just be an argument. Even though arguments can still cause stress, it is important to recognise the difference.

One of the main defining characteristics of bullying is the perceived imbalance of power. Bullying is targeted, intentional, and repetitive. It is a pattern of behaviours that harms a person, and bullying can take various forms.

Four types of bullying:

#### 1 – Verbal Bullying

This includes teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, and taunting.

#### 2 – Social Bullying

Often referred to as relational bullying, social bullying happens when someone is trying to deliberately hurt another's reputation. This includes spreading rumours, repeatedly excluding someone, and telling other people not to be friends with someone.

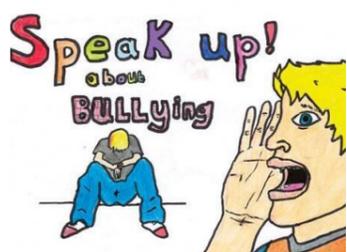
#### 3 – Physical Bullying

This includes hitting, pushing, tripping, stealing possessions, and sexual assault.

#### 4 – Cyber-Bullying

Cyber bullies use the internet (social media, mostly) to target their victims. Rumours and insults can quickly spread through social media, and it's nearly impossible to eradicate them.

### **Are you being bullied?**



If you are being bullied it is important to tell someone. This can seem scary at first, but telling someone can lighten your load and help you to work out how to solve the problem. Talking to someone is particularly important if you feel unsafe or frightened, or if you don't have many friends. Asking for help or talking to someone about your situation is not being weak or "giving in." In fact, telling someone can take a lot of strength and courage.

There are many people who might be able to help, including friends, family, nurses and support staff family.

## Are you a Bully?



Roving Reporter Ryan identified an important fact: sometimes people who are bullying do not realise that this and may have learnt that certain behaviours are ok, when really they are not.

Do you recognise yourself as a bully? Most bullies have, in fact, been victims of bullying in the first place. Bad experiences from the past are not valid excuses for subsequent bad behaviour; nevertheless, such experiences are often the causes of bad behaviour.

Sometimes being a bully gives the person a feeling of power. Understanding the cause of bullying behaviour is the beginning of change. An honest personal assessment may tell you that you need to adjust the way you treat others. If you talk to your key worker and staff they will to help you to get through your bad experiences. With therapy and support you can change your behaviour and become a happier person.

Roving Reporters Ryan and George said bullying should not happen anywhere. Whether you are a patient or a member of staff, everyone should treat each other respectfully, regardless of differences, and try to accept that we might not like everyone, but we need to learn to accept that everyone is different, and try to get on together.

## Patient Tips

1. Staff and patients suggested it would be a great idea if we had a patient and staff anti-bullying ambassador on each ward
2. Choose your words wisely, think before you speak so you don't hurt someone's feelings
3. Recognising we are all different and respecting each other's difference is important
4. Talk to someone, don't be alone
5. Remember a bully may need help to become aware and change how they behave
6. We all need to work together to stop bullying



WE HOPE THIS REPORTS HELPS TO CREATE AN ANTI-BULLYING CULTURE AND THAT OUR TIPS ARE USEFUL, NOT JUST FOR PATIENTS WHO LIVE IN OUR HOSPITAL, BUT FOR EVERYONE, SO WE CAN ALL HAVE A BETTER LIFE