

Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC) Anti-Bullying

Policy & Procedure

Greater Manchester Police

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1. Policy Statement

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) is committed to creating a Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC) scheme that is a positive environment for all involved. Everyone has a right to be treated with respect and dignity, and GMP will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment.

GMP recognises that sometimes it can be difficult for people to come forward if they feel they are being bullied or harassed. GMP will take all cases seriously and deal with them in a sensitive and supportive manner.

1.1 Aims

The purpose of this policy is to:

- prevent bullying from happening between children and young people who are a part of GMP or take part in GMP activities;
- ensure that any bullying involving cadets that does occur is stopped as soon as possible and that those involved receive the support they need; and
- provide information to all staff, volunteers, children and their families about what they can do to prevent and deal with bullying within the VPC.

2. Scope

This policy is a guide for preventing and tackling bullying between cadets and should be used by anyone working or volunteering on GMP's VPC scheme when responding to instances of bullying or seeking to prevent bullying from occurring.

This policy does not apply to bullying or harassment that takes place between adults within the organisation, which is covered by the [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#).

3. Roles & Responsibilities

Designated Responsible Officer (DRO)

- Promote the wellbeing of and ensure the safeguarding of all cadets.
- Through Force VPC governance structures, provide oversight on how the VPC prevents and responds to bullying.

VPC Central Team and Force Safeguarding Lead

- Build and maintain an ethos which is welcoming, supportive and inclusive of cadets, leaders, parents/carers and staff.
- Promote the wellbeing of, and ensure the safeguarding of all cadets.
- Ensure leaders receive appropriate training to recognise and prevent bullying, and ensure they are clear about their roles and responsibilities in preventing and responding to bullying.
- When appropriate, use partnerships and multi-agency approaches to prevent, and/or respond to bullying which happens away from VPC provision.
- Provide support and oversight for investigations into incidents of bullying.

- Record, investigate and respond to any complaints from cadets, parents/carers or the wider community related to the GMP's response to bullying instances or behaviour.

All Leaders

- Contribute to building and maintaining an ethos which is welcoming, supportive and inclusive of cadets, leaders, parents/carers and staff.
- Promote the wellbeing of and ensure the safeguarding of all cadets.
- Behave with respect and fairness to all cadets.
- Observe and implement the VPC's anti-bullying policy, ensuring any incidents of bullying are addressed in line with the procedure and principles outlined within the policy.
- Record, investigate and respond to any complaints of bullying from cadets, parents/carers or the wider community.
- Model positive attitudes and relationships.
- Promote a positive view of difference and challenge prejudice and stereotypical views both through practice and by modelling the behaviour and values they are trying to instil.

Cadets

- [Report](#) any incidents of bullying to a leader, whether directed at themselves or somebody else.
- Take responsibility for personal behaviour and actions, always treating one another with respect and kindness.
- Contribute to creating a positive environment where everyone feels safe and welcome.

Parents/Carers of Cadets

- Report any concerns regarding cadets involved in bullying to a leader or the Central VPC team.
- Demonstrate positive support for the VPC's anti-bullying policy.

4. Terms and Definitions

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, put down or injure the recipient.

Cyber Bullying is bullying that takes place online. It can be done through smartphones and tablets, social networking sites (such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram), messaging apps, gaming sites and chat rooms.

Harassment is defined by law as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Relevant **protected characteristics** are defined in the Equality Act (2010). These are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful:

- Age
- Disability

- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The harassment law does not cover other protected characteristics (maternity & pregnancy and marriage & civil partnerships). See the Diversity & Equality Policy for further information about protected characteristics.

Bullying and harassment are terms used interchangeably by most people. **The difference between bullying and harassment** is that harassment is unlawful and is unwanted behaviour relating to a protected characteristic.

Treating someone with **respect and dignity** means having a positive attitude towards them, showing consideration and politeness so that they feel valued and have a sense of wellbeing and self-worth.

5. Procedure

5.1 What is Bullying?

The impact of bullying on the wellbeing of children and young people can be serious, prolonged and have a significant impact on a child, young person's or vulnerable adult's wellbeing. As is the case with child/adult protection and safeguarding, everyone involved with the VPC has a part to play in dealing with it.

Bullying can occur in any group of children or young people, and sometimes between adults. It can take many forms and may be perpetrated online or using mobile devices, (cyberbullying). Bullying can become serious enough to be a child protection issue and, if so, it should be dealt with by following the procedures set out in the safeguarding policy.

Bullying can encompass a wide range of behaviours and can include: verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, including making threats and excluding a child from activities or friendship groups, cyber/online bullying, including trolling, sending threatening/abusive messages and/or creating and sharing malicious content.

Bullying can happen at any time or anywhere - a child/young person can be bullied online when they are alone in their bedroom trying to relax or do homework - so it can feel like there is no escape (NSPCC, 2016).

It is important to be aware that some forms of bullying are illegal and should be dealt with accordingly. These include:

- Violence or assault;
- Theft;
- Repeated harassment or intimidation, for example name calling, threats and abusive phone calls, emails or text messages;
- Hate crimes.

If you are not sure if a behaviour is bullying or criminal, speak to your unit coordinator or one of the central VPC team.

There are many reasons why a young person may bully another young person and it is important to consider this when addressing any instances of bullying; it may be necessary to work with/support the perpetrator as much as the victim.

The National VPC team have produced a [guidance document](#) on bullying where you can find more information on the risks of bullying and the impact it can have on a young person's wellbeing.

5.2 Preventing Bullying

Our primary focus will be to prevent bullying by:

- Creating a safe and inclusive environment.
- Regularly discussing differences that could motivate bullying, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference. Also, young people with different family situations.
- Regularly sharing and reminding all involved with the VPC of expectations, both online and face to face, set out in the [VPC Code of Conduct](#) and the [Code of Ethics](#), which applies to all volunteers and police staff.
- Creating and sharing behaviour management guidance, which will standardise our approach to dealing with all behaviours and will ensure the consequences of bullying reflect the seriousness of the incident so that others see that bullying is unacceptable.
- Regularly delivering sessions and facilitate discussions with staff/volunteers, cadets and our cadets families about bullying and how to prevent it.
- Providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with bullying, making sure our response to incidents of bullying takes into account:
 - the needs of the person being bullied;
 - the needs of the person displaying bullying behaviour;
 - needs of any bystanders; and
 - GMP as a whole.

5.3 How GMP's VPC Will Respond to Bullying

Should a bullying incident occur, staff and volunteers should follow the guidance below:

- Listen to all the young people involved to establish as much detail about what has happened. This will be done in a non-judgemental way.
- Inform the Session Lead, following VPC Behaviour Management Guidance, and if appropriate, the Central VPC team for advice and further assessment and consideration of [Problem Solving Guidance](#).
- Consider what, if any, actions or sanctions need to be taken next. These should always be agreed with the session lead and wherever possible include input from the young people involved. This may include:
 - Inform parents and carers (unless doing so would put a child/young people at further risk of harm).
 - Provide support to the child/children/young people being bullied, children/young people who witnessed the bullying and the child/children/young people who has been accused of bullying.

- If the bullying is online and involves the creation of malicious content ask the owner/creator of the content as well as anyone they may have shared it with to delete it.
- In more severe or complex instances it may be necessary to issue parties involved with a cooling off period. This should never be a punitive measure.
- In the most severe and persistent cases it may be necessary to consider a young person's suitability to continue as a cadet. The decision to stop a young person's involvement should only ever be a last resort and should only be done after using the [Problem Solving Guidance](#)
- Remember if the bullying is at any stage illegal it needs to be dealt with accordingly.

Remember to record details of the incident on the Incident Log and any actions you have taken and continue to monitor the situation. Cadet information will be kept on the incident log for as long as the individual is involved with cadets and deleted 6 months after they leave the scheme.

In some instances it may be appropriate to consider a restorative approach. This approach is not appropriate for everyone or for every situation but should be considered as a possible method for resolving an issue. There are four key approaches to a restorative process:

- Respect – for everyone, by listening to other opinions and learning to value them;
- Responsibility – taking responsibility for your own actions;
- Repair – developing the skills within a cadet community so its individual members have the necessary skills to identify solutions that repair harm;
- Re-Integration – working through a structured, supportive process that resolves the issue and ensure behaviours are not repeated, allowing cadets to remain in the police cadets whilst also achieving all of the above.

The National VPC team have produced a [guidance document](#) providing more information on how to use a restorative approach when dealing with bullying.

In the event that a cadet or other young person feels as though they are being bullied by a VPC Leader then this should be reported to the Central VPC team as soon as practicable. Depending on the nature of the complaint, this will then be dealt with in line with the VPC Safeguarding Policy and Procedure or the VPC Problem Solving Procedure.

5.4 Cyber Bullying and E-Safety

Cyber bullying happens online and can take place at any time or anywhere and unlike bullying that takes place offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go and it can sometimes feel like there's no escape or safe space. As young people spend so much of their time online, it is important that everyone is aware of the potential for cyber bullying to occur and what to do should it occur.

Cyber bullying can happen in different ways but some examples could be:

- Sending rude or unkind messages or comments.
- Sharing images/videos of someone without their consent.
- Setting up accounts or groups to be unkind to someone.
- Setting up groups and excluding someone.
- Pressuring someone to say or do something that they are uncomfortable with.
- Liking or sharing images/videos/posts that someone finds embarrassing or distressing.
- Liking or interacting with someone's account to cause irritation or upset.

- Interacting (messaging) with someone when they've asked you to stop.

5.4.1 How to Respond to Cyber Bullying

As well as following the steps outlined above, there are some additional measures you need to be aware of:

- Remind young people not to retaliate online or reply to any bullying messages/content. If the young person is not directly involved in the bullying remind them not to get involved.
- Make sure young people know how to prevent online bullying from happening again; this could include taking steps such as changing their contact details, blocking contacts or leaving a group/chat room.
- Find out if anyone else is involved with the bullying or if any of the bullying content has been shared and if it has, who with.
- If content has been shared, ask if the person responsible can remove/delete the content.
- It may be necessary to contact the host and ask them to take the content down; this can be done fairly easily on most social networking sites by 'reporting' specific content or problematic accounts/profiles.
- If the content is illegal then make sure it is recorded and the VPC Safeguarding Procedure is followed.

5.5 Guidance for Cadets if They Are Being Bullied

All cadets are provided with clear guidance on how to respond to instances of bullying.

Everyone has a right to feel safe and comfortable when involved in VPC activities, as well as when travelling to and from VPC sessions/activities.

If you or somebody else is being bullied **you must talk to someone about it.**

Who should you tell? In the first instance you should talk to one of your unit leaders or, if you feel uncomfortable doing this, one of the central VPC team. If you do not feel as though you can speak to any of these people, speak to a friend or your parent/carer and they can speak to us for you.

If you are being bullied and you do not talk to us about it, we will not be able to help and there is a chance the bullying will go on.

6. Associated Documents

- [Children Act 1989](#) and [2004](#)
 - [Communications Act 2003](#)
 - [Equality Act 2010](#)
 - [Malicious Communications Act 1988](#)
 - [Preventing and tackling bullying 2017](#)
 - [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)
 - [Public Order Act 1986](#)
 - [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)
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7. Statutory Compliance & Consultation

7.1 Statutory Compliance

7.1.1 Equality Act (2010)

The aim of the policy is to promote equality by eliminating bullying, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act. It is also intended to help foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.1.2 The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018)

Greater Manchester Police has a duty to ensure, so far as is possible, that all staff comply with the provisions of the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, particularly relating to their access to, and dissemination of, a wide variety of personal information.

This policy and procedure has been assessed for compliance issues by the Information Compliance and Records Management Unit (ICRMU), and is considered to be compliant with the legislation as there is a clear lawful basis for the processing of personal data and special category data. It should be read in conjunction with GMP's Data Protection Policy and guidance issued on the Data Protection Intranet pages.

For further information on Data Protection, you should refer to the [Force Data Protection Policy](#) or consult the ICRMU on [REDACTED].

7.1.3 Freedom of Information Act (2000)

This procedure is deemed suitable for disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

However, any requests for its disclosure should be directed through the Information Compliance and Records Management Unit via the [Freedom of Information mailbox](#). For advice and assistance on FOI, please contact [REDACTED].

7.2 Consultation

The table below outlines the parties that have been consulted when drafting the policy and procedure:

Department	Comments
National VPC team	
Regional Citizens in Policing Coordinator	
Force Governance Board (upcoming)	
ICRMU	Amendments to 7.1.2 & 7.1.3
Consultation: [REDACTED], GMB Trade Union, [REDACTED], AWP, Black and Asian Police Association, GMP Christian Police Network, [REDACTED], Disability Support Network, [REDACTED].	[REDACTED] (Unison) requested a change to wording on p. 1 and additional guidance to be added to the Cadets sub-section on p. 2.

8. Appendices

No appendices.