

# Pack it in – helping to stop playground bullying

During Anti-Bullying Week in November, children at a Rotherham primary school had lots of fun learning all about bullying using special Community-sponsored activity packs. Region 3 Secretary Steve Stacey tells us how that came about.



Earlier this year Region 3 Secretary Steve Stacey and local councillor and Community member Peter Thirlwall got 'top marks' when they presented a union-sponsored, anti-bullying pack to teachers and children at Flanderwell Junior and Infant School in Rotherham.

The packs were produced by the Children's Safety Education Foundation, which offers a range of resources to equip children with the skills and knowledge to deal with 'emergency' situations – ranging from house fires to being offered drugs. 'It's the second year we've sponsored the packs here in Yorkshire,' explains Steve, 'It's a great way to help kids stay safe and for the union to build relationships with other community organisations.'

'Some members had links with Flanderwell school so they proposed it should receive the pack, and bullying topped the list of themes. Thousands of kids in our communities suffer every day because of bullying,' adds Steve. 'It's something we can't ignore.' The NSPCC estimates that about a third of children in the UK are bullied by their peers. Whether physical violence or psychological abuse, the effects on victims can be dramatic. Children can become withdrawn and anxious, around 10% play truant to escape the torment and up to 25 commit suicide each year because they are being bullied.

Community's concern doesn't just stop at playground bullying. Studies show that around one in five employees has been bullied or harassed at work in the last two years and that those who were bullied at school are at the highest risk of workplace victimisation. 'Teaching kids early on in life that bullying is wrong is in all our interests,' says Steve.

'Bullying has happened to some extent in every school, home and workplace since time immemorial. However, we've found it has become

more subtle, even among small children, so we need to be more vigilant,' says Flanderwell's Head teacher Terri Hill. 'It's not just hitting and name-calling, it can be threatening text messages, being excluded or made to feel uncomfortable.'

Bullying is often hard to identify and that's why we welcome the packs. They help children recognise and report it, which fits with our ethos as a 'telling school'.

'While the Government requires all schools to have an anti-bullying strategy, it can be difficult to put into practice without the children on side,' adds Terri. 'That's where the activity packs come in. They are a great classroom resource for our teachers and learning mentors to use throughout the year, giving them a new way of engaging with children about bullying. We can use these fun games, activities and stories right across our age range (three to 11) to discuss what bullying is, why it's wrong and what they can do to stop it.'

'We'll be monitoring how our teachers and children get on with the packs, and reporting back to Steve next year,' promises Terri. 'We want to thank Community for its support. What it's doing is very important – these packs keep bullying high on the agenda at school and in the community. People often see bullying but don't want to get involved. With the packs, we are giving our children the confidence to come forward and speak out against bullying whenever and wherever they see it.'

Region 3 members have already chosen next year's pack theme, 'Stay safe, play safe', to link with the European Health and Safety week. If your branch would like to get involved with the Children's Safety Education Foundation, call 0161 477 5122 [www.csef.net](http://www.csef.net) for contact details.



## Helping you help your child

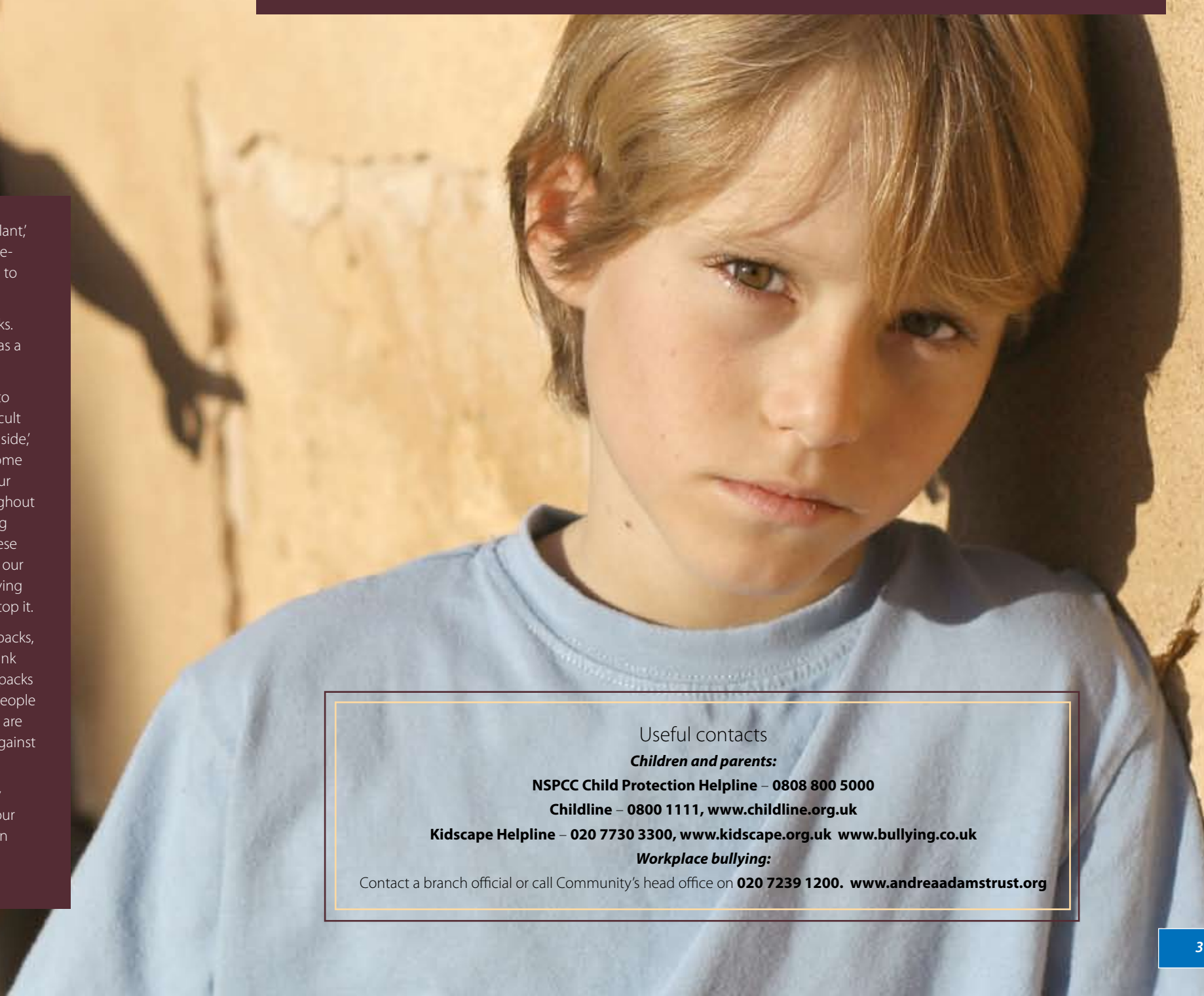
Head of the NSPCC's ChildLine in Partnership in Schools Lindsay Gilbert offers some advice if your child is being bullied:

### At school

- Inform your child's class teacher or head of year immediately.
- Ask your child to keep a 'bullying diary' of what happens, when and where and any evidence such as threatening text messages.
- Make it official by putting your concerns in writing, and ask for the letter to be put on your child's file and for a written reply of what action the school will take.
- Meet with them again after a few weeks to discuss the situation.
  - If your child can't face school, ask your local pupil support department or education social worker for help. If you keep your child off school without any tutoring you could be prosecuted.

### At home

- Reassure them that the bullying is not their fault – remind them you love them and will support them, and that bullying is always wrong.
- Invite their friends around and make time away from school fun.
- Give them your full attention when they talk about bullying – ask questions that need more than a 'yes or no' answer so they can explain how they feel.



#### Useful contacts

##### Children and parents:

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline – 0808 800 5000

Childline – 0800 1111, [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Kidscape Helpline – 020 7730 3300, [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk) [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

##### Workplace bullying:

Contact a branch official or call Community's head office on 020 7239 1200. [www.andreaadamstrust.org](http://www.andreaadamstrust.org)