



FRIENDS AGAINST BULLYING (FAB)

Bullying affects every young person whether they have witnessed it, been on the receiving end or have themselves bullied, or often all three! Our experience of working with young people tells us that they want to do something to stop bullying but often don't know what to do. This can often lead to inaction, or responding with name-calling or violence.

Friends Against Bullying (FAB) is a peer-led programme that young leaders run in their school. FAB in primary schools provides a playground mentoring service; and in secondary schools a regular lunchtime club, in addition to assemblies, setting up bully boxes etc.

We train young people to be leaders by recognising and appreciating their own and others identities; understanding the impact of stereotyping; and teaching practical skills to challenge name-calling in a positive way, that aims to change the perpetrators attitude and therefore, behaviour. The additional benefits are emotional literacy, increased confidence and self-esteem, active citizenship, and young people taking a role of responsibility and leadership. FAB creates a solid foundation for a whole school approach, by putting a schools anti-bullying policy into action.

Our project is a Peer-led Education Project to Reduce Bullying and Prejudice. A joint Diversity Hub and Leicester City Council anti-bullying survey of young people in 6 different schools across the city (random sample of 20% students across all age groups) in 1999 found that overall, 35% of young people had experienced bullying. In 2005 the newly appointed Children's Commissioner, Al Aynsley-Green, said that without exception, all the young people he had spoken to had experience of bullying.

Our experience of working with young people tells us that most young people want to do something to stop bullying, but that many are reluctant to intervene because they do not know what would be useful to say or do, thus leading to inaction. Of those who do intervene, a lack of skills means that the most common response is to criticise or counter-attack, often escalating the problem. FAB breaks the cycle of inaction and counter-attack by teaching young people to:

- Recognise and appreciate the different identities each person holds
- Feel good about the groups to which they belong
- Understand how stereotyping results in different groups being mistreated or bullied
- Recognise how past mistreatment and hurt results in attacks on others and take responsibility for challenging their own prejudices and behaviour
- Develop effective skills in intervening when there is bullying, prejudice or mistreatment, in a way that perpetrators are assisted to recognise the reasons for their behaviour and to make positive changes to this
- Take leadership in educating others and being effective allies and supporters for each other.

We train young people in the skills they need so they can take leadership with other young people to end bullying in their school. We work with bullies and the bullied together, providing a powerful teaching environment that demonstrates how we all get hurt and how that hurt can so easily be passed on if we do not get a chance to heal from it. This is followed by the teaching of practical skills, so that anyone can make an intervention when bullying is going on, whilst keeping it safe for themselves.

The FAB approach is unique in that it offers schools and young people a raft of strategies that everyone can get involved in. Much bullying takes place outside the school gates, on the way to and from school, and that which is located within schools is often hidden from staff. Whilst essential, it is not enough for only adults to have good intervention skills because they are so often not around when bullying takes place anyway. Rather than encourage young people and children to be reliant on an adult to intervene, it is more respectful of young people and children to train them in the skills and confidence to be empowered to be able to intervene on their own and others behalf. Our training programme teaches all the steps required to make effective interventions to stop bullying in its tracks and to deliver peer training programmes within the school setting. As they develop and utilise their skills children and young people realise they can also utilise their skills beyond the school community and many become engaged in working to build community cohesion.

FAB teams foster preventative action on bullying and prejudice, enabling young people to build bridges between groups and individuals divided by their differences. The foundation of our work with young people is based on the 5 principles outlined in Every Child Matters by being mentally and emotionally healthy, staying safe from bullying and discrimination, enjoying and achieving personal and social development, making a positive contribution through developing positive relationships and choosing not to bully and discriminate, and economic well-being through the development of life skills, confidence and a positive contribution to their CVs.

We help schools/colleges to develop a systematic plan of action that creates cultural change so there is no space for bullying to take a hold and fosters healthy intergroup relations among all members of the school/college community, whether students, teaching or other staff.

If you would like to discuss setting up a FAB group in your school the project workers can be contacted on 0116-222-9978 or via email at margaret@diversityhub.org.uk

To see a FAB project at work visit Sir Jonathan North's website www.sjncc.leics.sch.uk where the young people have put together their own exciting and vibrant web page.