

Worcestershire Bullying Survey for Parents and Carers

Report based on the results

November 2013



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Introduction to the survey

During the summer of 2013 Parents' Voice conducted an online survey for parents and carers. We wanted anyone whose child had been affected by bullying *in any way* in Worcestershire to take part.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in this survey and those people and organisations who helped to make people aware of it.

Although we began with the simple intention of investigating where and how parents find information and support when a child or young person is affected by bullying, we found out so much more.

This report is a snapshot of what happens in Worcestershire when a family is affected by bullying – we do not claim that it gives a full picture.

We have listed each of the questions as they were presented in the survey. We have then included charts, further details and, in some instances, further analysis and comments.

This is what we said at the beginning of the survey:

“Our definition of bullying:

Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person. It can be physical (such as hitting), verbal (eg: name-calling) or psychological (eg: ignoring or excluding somebody from groups or activities). Nowadays "cyberbullying" can be carried out over the internet or on mobile phones - using emails, social networking sites, text messages etc.

However, if you feel your child has been affected by bullying in some way, please answer this questionnaire even if our definition doesn't quite fit what has happened.”

On the following pages you can read how parents and carers responded.

Disclaimer: Please note that we have tried to present the results of the survey accurately but we are human and may have made an occasional error, typographical or otherwise. This is not intentional and we hope you will forgive us!¹

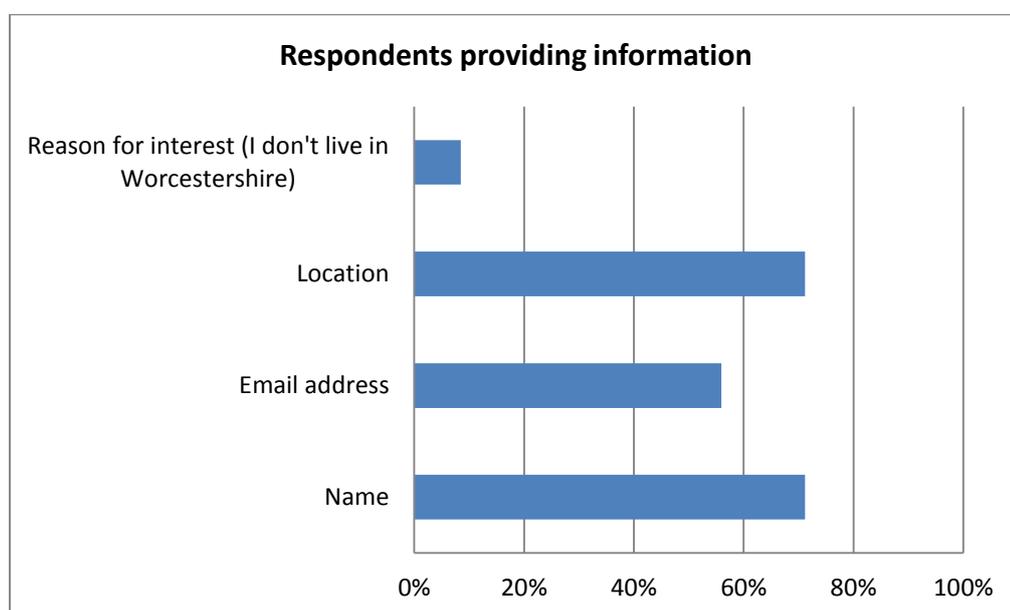
¹ If you find an error which you think needs correction, please email us: info@parentsvoice.co.uk

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Questions

Q1 Your name, email address and location

If you are willing to give it, please tell us your name (this may be just your first name or an initial and your surname or maybe a nickname), email address and your postcode. If you give us your email address we will send you a copy of our report and let you know of any organisations we share it with; if we can, we will tell you of any actions they may take to improve support for families. If you live outside the county, could you briefly tell us why you are interested in completing this questionnaire (eg: your child may attend a school or activities in Worcestershire).



NB: The chart shows the percentage of total respondents to the **whole survey**, not just to this particular question.

This question was optional. 75% of the total number of people who took part in the survey gave some personal information.

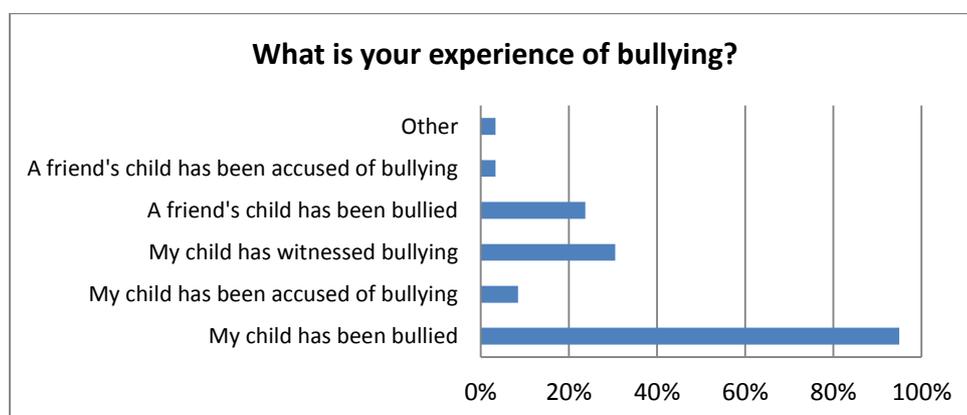
Just over 71% of total respondents gave us a name; 56% supplied an email address; 71% of respondents gave a location. 8% of respondents told us the reason for their interest (eg: the bullying happened in Worcestershire).

Our comments:

Anyone taking part in the survey could remain anonymous if they wanted to. The locations given indicate that respondents were from a variety of places throughout Worcestershire.

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Q2 What is your experience of bullying (please tick all that apply)?



This question was compulsory. Multiple options could be selected. 95% of respondents said their child had been bullied.

Options:	Percentage
My child has been bullied	95%
My child has been accused of bullying	8%
My child has witnessed bullying	31%
A friend's child has been bullied	24%
A friend's child has been accused of bullying	3%
Other	3%

Every parent whose child had been accused of bullying ticked at least one other option. For example, 5% of respondents said their child had both been bullied and been accused of bullying.

One respondent said their child had been bullied, been accused of bullying and witnessed bullying plus a friend's child had been bullied. One respondent ticked all the options apart from "other".

Information supplied under "other" varied. For example, one person said "My child is always trying to stop bullying. They are in the middle trying to calm it down".

We think the following comment about an adult bullying a child is extremely worrying. "Children with special needs are bullied by vile staff. It has NOTHING to do with training, or a lack of it. It has everything to do with how they personally feel about kids with additional needs being in mainstream school. My poor child is being, and has been bullied by a member of staff ... But my point is that adults bully children at school too, as sickening as it is, it does happen."

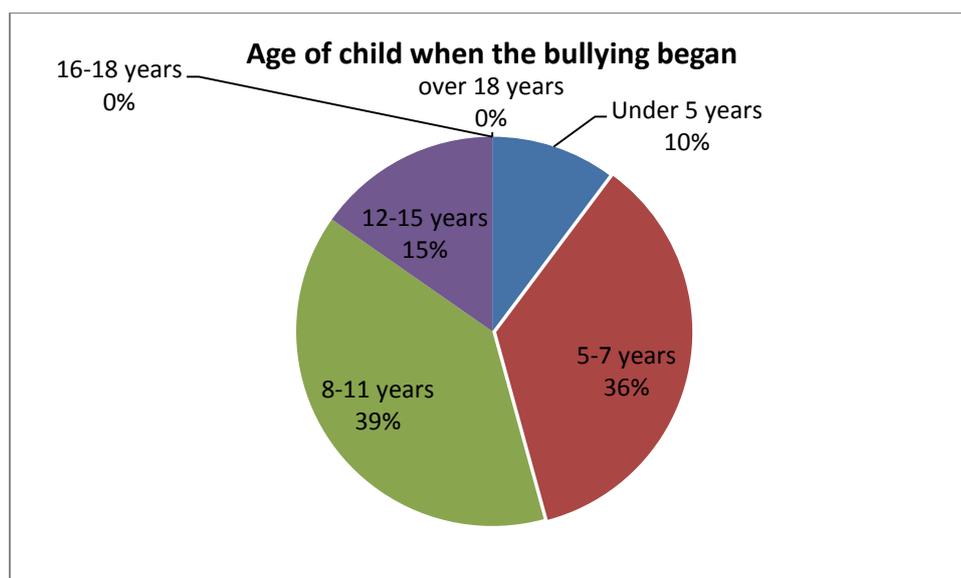
Our comments:

Bullying can affect families in many different ways and often in more than one way.

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Maybe the lower percentage of responses relating to children accused of bullying reflects a reluctance to accept that certain behaviour is bullying and that it does happen. Parents who said their child had been bullied or who knew a friend whose child had been bullied took part in far greater numbers.

Q3 What age was the child when the bullying began? If you are unsure of the exact age please tell us the approximate age.



This question was compulsory. Only one option could be selected. 39% of respondents said the child was between 8 and 11 years old when the bullying began. Just over 10% of respondents said the child was less than 5 years old (approximately). Nobody said the child was 16 – 18 years old or over 18 years old when the bullying began.

The duration of the bullying (Q4) varied for those respondents who said the child was less than 5 years old when the bullying began; one third of them said that it lasted more than 3 years. The location (Q5) also varied: one third said "in school" and another third cited school and other locations/methods including outside school (on the journey home).

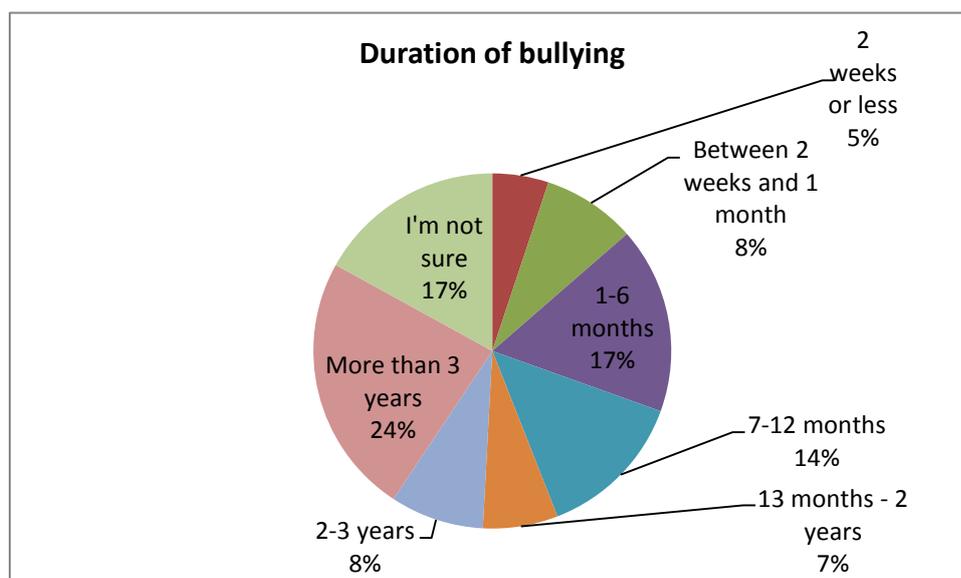
Only 15% of respondents said the bullying began when the child was between 12 and 15 years of age.

Our comments:

We did not expect anyone to select the "Under 5 years" option. We were surprised that relatively few respondents selected the older age groups.

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Q4 How long did the bullying last approximately?



This question was compulsory. Only one option could be selected. 24% said the bullying lasted more than 3 years. 17% said they were not sure how long the bullying lasted.

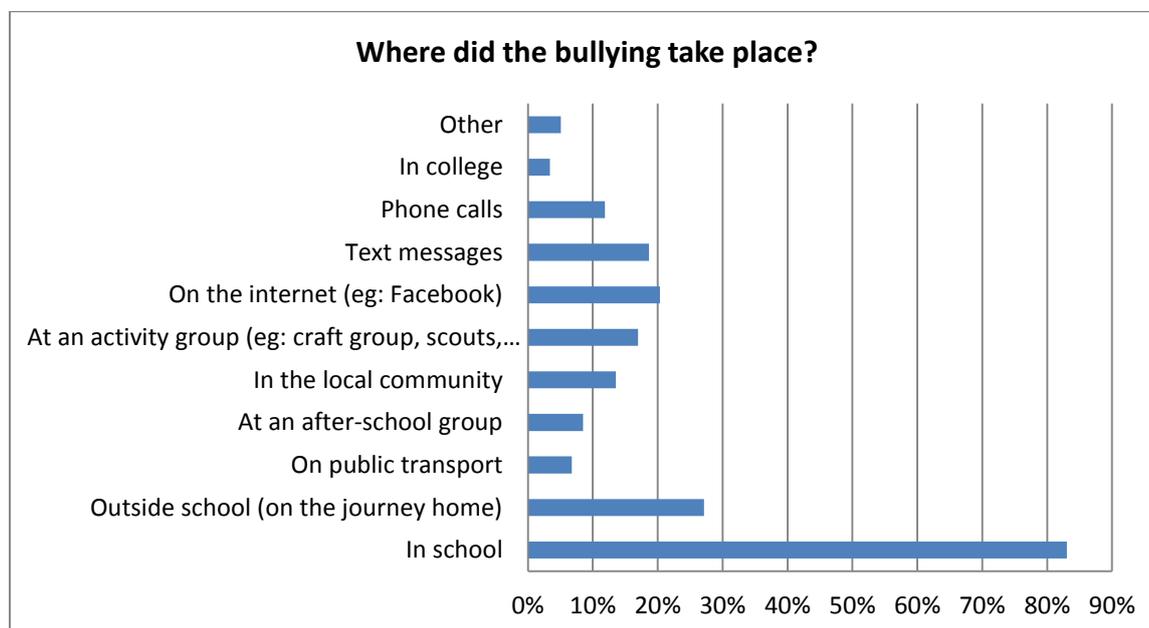
24% of respondents said the bullying lasted more than 3 years. The majority of people who said this (64%) also said that the bullying began when the child was between 5 – 7 years old. 92% of respondents who said bullying lasted more than 3 years also said that bullying took place in school, 43% said it took place “outside school”, on the internet and via text messages. Only 1 respondent who ticked this option later said they were happy with the way the situation was sorted out (Q10); not surprisingly none were happy with how quickly it was sorted out (Q10).

Our comments:

We feel the chart above speaks volumes! The vast majority of respondents said that the bullying lasted over a month.

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Q5 Where/how did the bullying take place (please tick all that apply):



This question was compulsory. Multiple options could be selected. 83% of respondents said that bullying took place in school. 27% of respondents said bullying took place outside school on the journey home. Just over 20% told us that bullying took place on the internet.

Options:

Percentage

In school	83%
Outside school (on the journey home)	27%
On public transport	7%
At an after-school group	8%
In the local community	14%
At an activity group (eg: craft group, scouts, youth club)	17%
On the internet (eg: Facebook)	20%
Text messages	19%
Phone calls	12%
In college	3%
Other	5%

Everyone who ticked “In school” also ticked other options: these included “outside school (on the journey home)”, “on the internet”, “text messages”, “in the local community” and “phone calls”.

The respondents who said bullying took place in college also said that bullying lasted 3 years or more (Q4). They also ticked in the local community, on the internet, text messages and phone calls.

“Other” places/methods varied and included Facebook/tumblr, gangs of boys and at a party.

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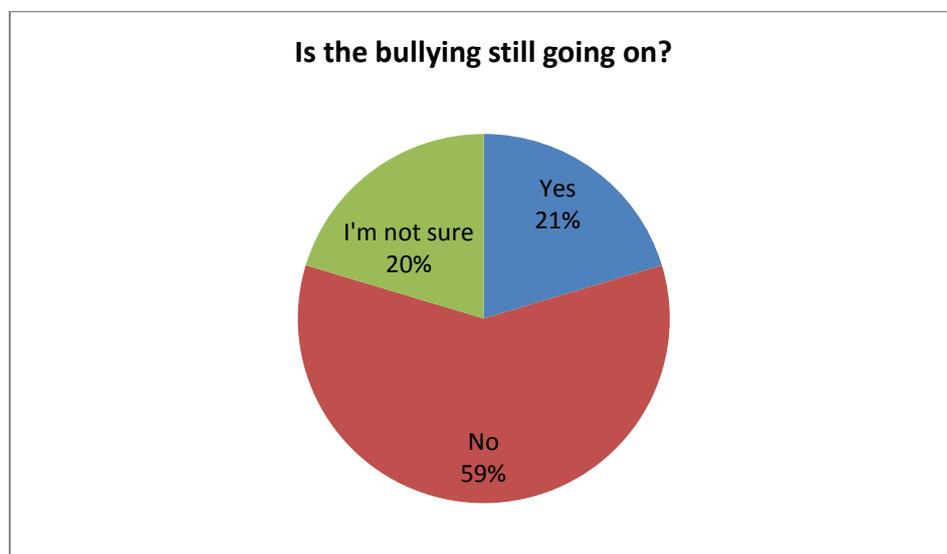
Our comments:

It appears that although bullying may begin in one location or in one way it may also continue in other locations.

Since nobody selected the ages of 16- 18 years for Q3, we suggest that although some respondents said bullying took place in college that is not where it began (especially since they also said it lasted 3 years or more).

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Q6 Is the bullying still going on?



This question was compulsory. Only one option could be selected. Almost 60% of respondents told us the bullying was **not** still going on. 20% of respondents said they were not sure if the bullying was still going on; the remaining 21% said Yes, it was still going on.

Of the people who said yes, the bullying was still going on, a quarter of them also answered that the bullying lasted 13 months – 2 years and another quarter said it lasted 2 – 3 years; a third of them said “I’m not sure” and the remainder said more than 3 years(Q4). 83% of them said bullying took place in school (Q5)

Actions taken by this group of respondents were as follows (Q9):

73% said they spoke to the class teacher/group leader/adult in charge

55% said that they spoke to the head teacher.

Other measures taken by respondents who said the bullying was still going on included: contacting the police, ringing parent partnership, speaking with the school governors and removing their child from school to be educated at home or considering home education (Q9).

Of the respondents who answered “No” to this question, 31% said that the bullying lasted more than 3 years and 29% said that it lasted between 1 and 6 months (Q4).

Actions taken by this group of respondents (Q9) were as follows:

77% said they spoke to the class teacher/group leader/adult in charge

49% said that they spoke to the head teacher

9% spoke to the school governors

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9% spoke with the child's parents (the respondent's child was bullied)

17% said they spoke with Parent Partnership

14% contacted the police.

22% arranged for their child to go to another school

17% removed the child from school to be educated at home

Parents seemed to try various things to stop bullying. Comments in response to question 9 from those who said the bullying was no longer going on included:

"I made sure that I was always close by or that another family member was."

"The retired school teacher I spoke to has contacts at the school. She dealt with it and so bypassed my child's insistence that I didn't contact the school."

"My child removed themselves from the club, and won't go back, so they now miss out on an activity they enjoy. The 2nd incident I liaised with the Pastoral Care Manager and the situation was resolved immediately."

"I spoke to the child as well" [nuisance behaviour affected other family members]

"My son left the youth club."

"Following conversations and emails with the Headmaster, he talked with the children and the [number of bullies reduced]. We also started [martial arts] lessons to improve self-confidence. I also got family members (grandparents, aunties etc) who had also been bullied in the past to discuss their experiences with my child. I wanted my child to understand that there have always been bullies and that it wasn't anything they had done - it really helped having a grandad talk about his experiences. I didn't talk to the parents of the bullies as I wanted to go through the proper channels at school and have a record of my complaints."

This comment illustrates the contrast in potential outcomes from similar situations: *"I was able to resolve my child's bullying experiences by speaking to the class teacher (on more than one occasion). My friend was forced to move her child to another school. The existing school did not take appropriate action when her child's bullying culminated in them being [physically harmed]."*

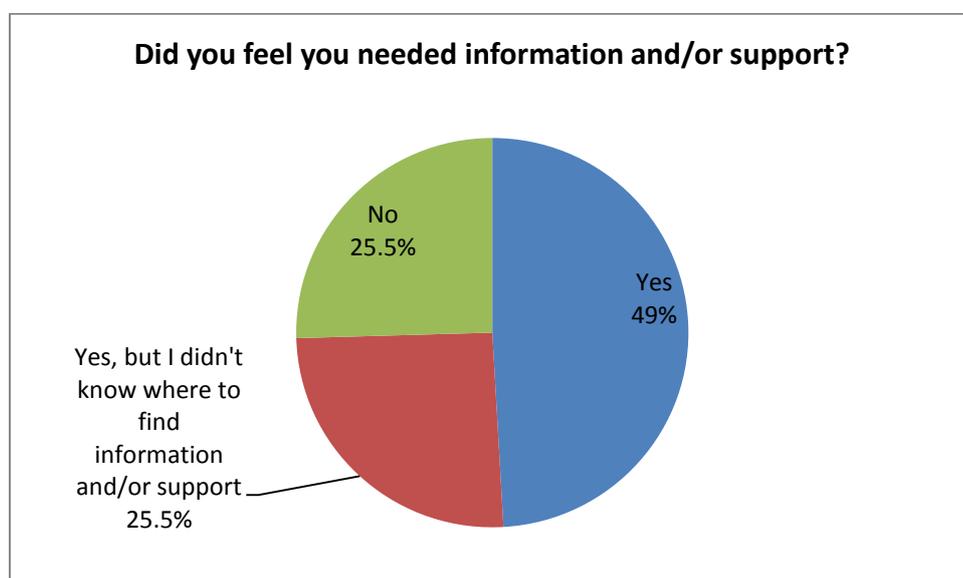
Our comments:

The majority of respondents replied "No" to this question. One fifth of respondents were not sure whether the bullying was still going on.

It appears that those who said the bullying was still going on did many of the same things as those who said it was not still going on. 39% of the respondents who said bullying was no longer going on also said that they had removed their child from school, either to attend another school or to be educated at home.

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Q7 Did you feel you needed information and/or support to help you and/or your child?



Only 25.5% of respondents felt they didn't need information and/or support. 49% of respondents felt they needed information and/or support, and a further 25.5% felt they needed information and/or support but they didn't know where to find it.

A large number of people (59%) who said yes, they needed information/support also ticked "on the internet" for where they looked for information (Q8).

An even greater number of people (63%) who said yes, they needed information/support also ticked school teachers for where they looked for information (Q8).

25.5% said yes, but they didn't know where to find information and/or support. Of these respondents, 43% also ticked school teachers for where they looked for information (Q8).

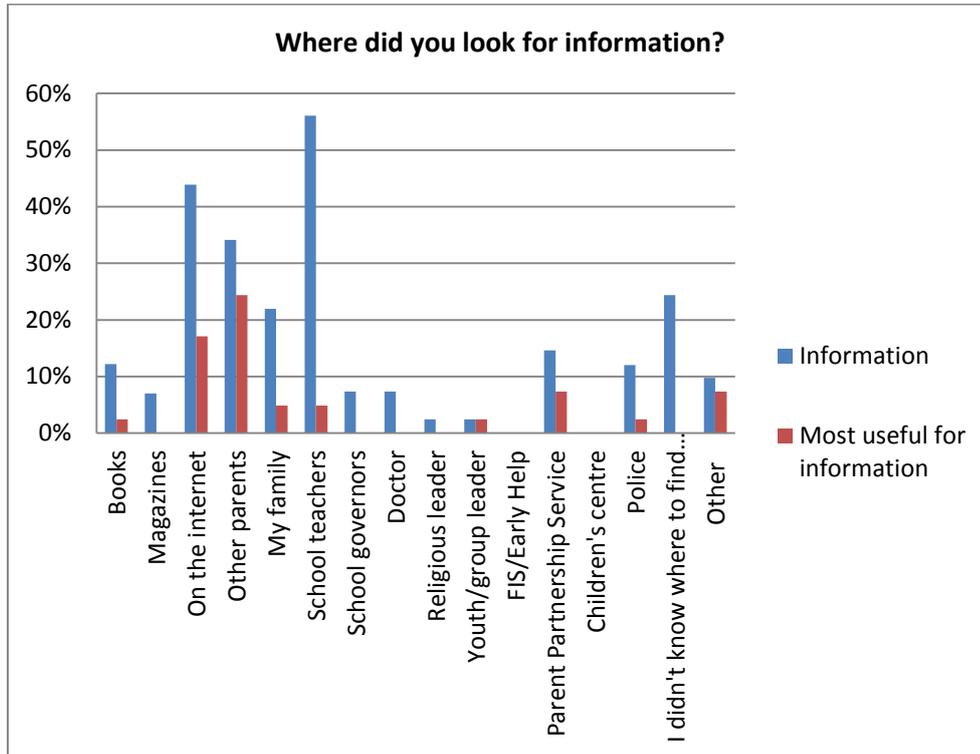
25.5% said no, they didn't need information and/or support.

Our comments:

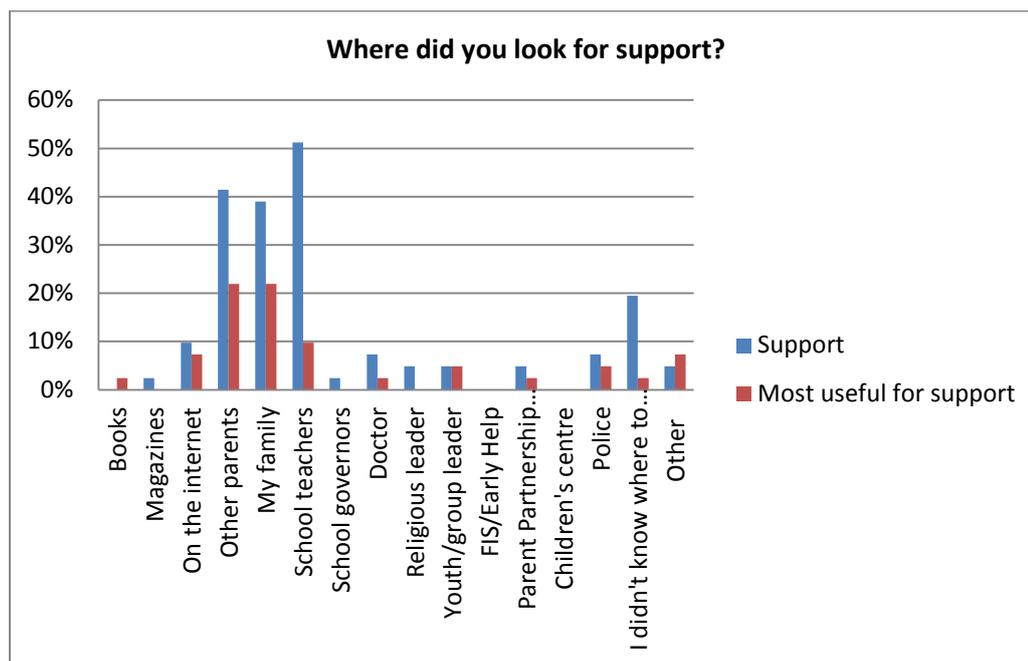
It appears that about 75% of respondents felt they needed information and/or support and that most parents ask school teachers for information.

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Q8 Please tell us where you looked or who you asked for information (knowledge or facts) and/or support (help, encouragement or comfort). You can tick boxes in the first column to tell us where you looked for information and boxes in the 3rd column to tell us where you looked for support. Please tick all that apply. Please tell us who/what you found most useful or helpful by ticking a box in the second column (most helpful for information) and fourth column (most helpful for support). You can tell us why they were so useful/helpful in the comments box at the bottom. If you found a website useful, please give us its name or other details if you can.



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This question was optional. Multiple options could be selected. Many people gave comments which give an insight into what happens when parents need information or support.

More people ticked “School teachers” than any other option – in total, 71% of the people who answered this question (ie: some ticked for information, some for support, some for both). However, of those who did so, relatively few then said they were most useful.

“Other parents” was another popular option. 42% also said they were most useful for information and 38% said they were most useful for support.

54% of people answering this question chose “On the internet” for either information or support. 82% of the respondents who chose this option used it for information and 18% for support. 32% said it was most useful for information; 14% of those who looked for support on the internet found it most useful.

One respondent commented “*Kidscape very useful and parent/child friendly*”. Another said: “*Childline was a really good website and also Coram Legal Services, also the County Council Website had a lot of good pointers.*”

22% of the people who answered this question ticked “Parent Partnership”. A third of those who had contacted Parent Partnership found them most useful for information and 11% found them most useful for support. One parent commented: “*Parent partnership service put me in touch with people who made school take action*”. However, another parent who contacted them for information said “*Parent Partnership were excellent with the practical support but could only do so much as the school denied there was a problem.*”

17% of people who answered this question ticked “Police” for either information or support. Of those who chose this option, 15% found them most useful for information.

17% of people who answered this question ticked “books” for either information or support. Of those who chose this option, 15% found them most useful for information.

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10% of people who answered this question ticked "magazines". None of them found magazines "most useful".

10% of people who answered this question ticked "doctor". Of the people who ticked this option, 25% also said the doctor was most useful for support.

7% of people who answered this question ticked "Youth/group leader". Those who did also said they were most useful for information or support.

24% of people who answered this question ticked that they did not know where to find information (though some did tick at least one other option for information; half of them also ticked "school teachers" for information). 20% of people who answered this question ticked that they did not know where to find support (though all did tick at least one other option for support; 63% of them also ticked "school teachers" for support).

Nobody ticked "Family Information Service/Early Help". Nobody ticked "Children's Centre".

15% of people who answered this question ticked "Other" for either information or support and gave details. Of those who chose this option, 50% also ticked "most useful" for information and support. One parent commented: "Local council education department were helpful when I made enquiries about how to complain about how the school were dealing with the issues." Another said: "ISL, Looked After Children's Services were helpful too." One person asked a friend who had been a school teacher to help.

Some of the respondents who ticked "Other" did not have good experiences. Comments included:

"CAMHS (referred to by GP due to potential suicide risk) were next to useless."

"Did not find information that was helpful. Doctor referred to CAMHS but they turned down referral!"

"The school teachers were useless and patronising, they couldn't see the problem and said it's not bullying, just some minor name calling."

"I did not really know where to begin so I started with the school's anti bullying policy which was just a piece of paper - nobody really took it seriously and if I went into school to complain about the bullying it just made it worse for my child as they were called into the office to meet with the bully. This just made the bully worse and I had to go away and leave my child to more of the same or worse. It became easier to just accept it and pick up the pieces when they got home."

"We have not got the intervention of the Educational Psychologist (who was refused entry to the school to work with our child)."

"I had most trouble at college and tried with the teachers, the deputy head [and] ... the head who was no help at all. I was bitterly disappointed and it has made my child very ill to date. I couldn't use the computer so well then and didn't know how to block people. Every one talks about it but there is no information on how to do it. I was at my wits end as was my child."

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"The school did not deal with the situation as the child's mother did not believe her child was a bully so they said there was nothing they could do! It should have been dealt with as soon as the first incident happened, not left to continue for months."

"The teachers didn't help at all, they made us feel like bad parents. We don't feel we can talk to them any more."

"Despite having very comprehensive anti-bullying policies the schools do not seem to be able to deal effectively with bullying, including communicating with parents & carers. It seems that now most high schools are academies it is even more difficult to get issues addressed."

"School SENCO did not seem to understand that by taking the bullying away, our child was able to come into school more relaxed and chilled so their emotions were less heightened and therefore they did not snap so easily and retaliate to the bullies when left to their own devices."

Other parents appeared to be the most useful for information. However, the following comments indicate that other parents are not always helpful and that families may feel isolated, especially in small communities: *"It was hard to find support because it was a small, close-knit group; other parents seemed to close their eyes to what happened because it didn't affect their child."*

"We all felt isolated as there is an idea that if others are seen with you their child will be next."

However, there were also comments from parents who successfully found information and/or support:

"Mentioning it to the school teacher resulted in the offender being taken to one side and having explained that his behaviour was upsetting my child. School teachers were sympathetic and I was left in no doubt that the matter would be sorted! Talking to my family allowed me to put into perspective what was happening and take the appropriate action."

"Information = support group Support = CAMHS. Other parents were helpful in that they gave me an outlet to talk about what was going on. Also websites that specialise in my child's difficulties (diagnoses) for ideas to develop strategies for child. Information taken from the internet was useful but not applied when passed on to school."

"Local council education department were helpful when I made enquiries about how to complain about how the school were dealing with the issues."

"I borrowed a number of books from my local library (books suitable to look at with my child) and found that they had a good range to choose from (both in the general non-fiction section and in the CAMHS collection). This was a good way of discussing the issue with my child and getting them to open up about what was happening."

"When this was happening to my child at school, it was also happening to their friend at the same time, as parents we shared information and concerns with each other."

Our comments: Teachers seemed to be the most popular choice when parents looked for information or support, but only a small percentage of those who did so rated them as most useful for either. "Other

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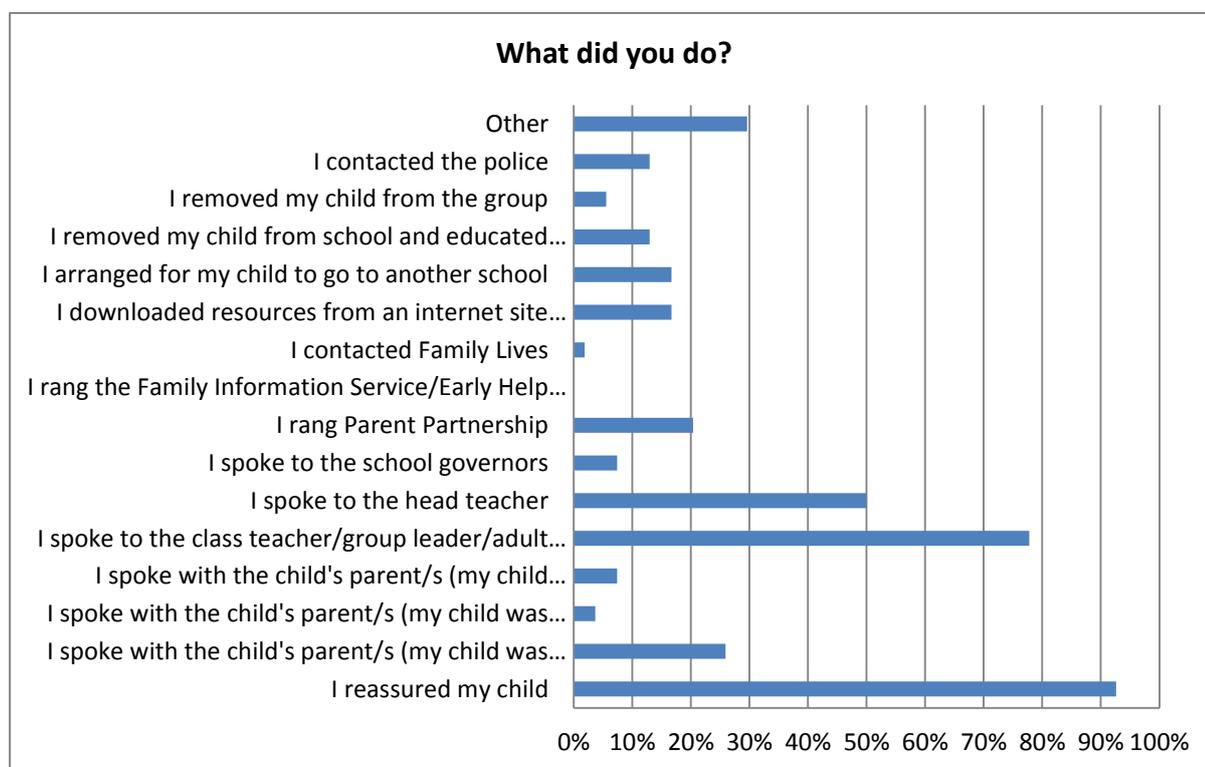
parents” and “my family” were also popular choices for information and support and seem to be rated as useful.

Parents who looked on the internet for information do not seem to have found it most useful.

We were surprised that nobody had used the Family Information Service (now the Early Help Hub) since it is a Worcestershire service.

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Q9 What did you do? Please tick all that apply.



Respondents could select multiple options. 78% of people who responded to this question said they spoke to the class teacher/group leader/adult in charge.

Options:

Percentage

I reassured my child	93%
I spoke with the child's parent/s (my child was bullied)	26%
I spoke with the child's parent/s (my child was accused of bullying)	4%
I spoke with the child's parent/s (my child witnessed bullying)	7%
I spoke to the class teacher/group leader/adult in charge	78%
I spoke to the head teacher	50%
I spoke to the school governors	7%
I rang Parent Partnership	20%
I rang the Family Information Service/Early Help Hub	0%
I contacted Family Lives	2%
I downloaded resources from an internet site (eg: Kidscape)	17%
I arranged for my child to go to another school	17%
I removed my child from school and educated him/her at home ²	13%
I removed my child from the group	6%

² In 2012/13 around 5% of referrals to Worcestershire's Home Education Liaison Officer were specifically due to bullying; some people who took part in the survey may have removed their child from school prior to September 2012. There were no new referrals due to bullying in September and October 2013.

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I contacted the police	13%
Other	30%

Unsurprisingly most respondents said they reassured their child. Speaking to teachers (78% of respondents to this question) or head teachers (50% of respondents to this question) was the most common action.

Nobody ticked "I rang the Family Information Service/Early Help".

30% of people who answered this question ticked "Other" and told us what else they did. Some of these comments have already been detailed in relation to question 6.

Other comments included:

"I will be monitoring the school situation when my child returns there in September."

"I am desperately trying to get my child out of the school although the school nearer my own is full."

"Also considering home education."

"I discussed it with my child and enabled my child to deal with it more effectively and with support"

"I told my child they could change school but they didn't want to leave their friends."

"Our child has lost confidence and self-esteem. We are now considering a school move ... but it would have to be a private school where the classes are smaller and they can give our child the nurturing they need to do well in their studies. Obviously this is difficult due to finances. Although it is well known that to move a child is detrimental we are beginning to feel it is the only answer."

"I will be contacting governors next, and if things do not improve, I will be removing my child from the school, but I think the bullying adult should be removed!"

One respondent described in detail how their child was affected both by bullying over the internet and in real life. It involved images which had been digitally altered. The effects on the family were extreme.

Our comments:

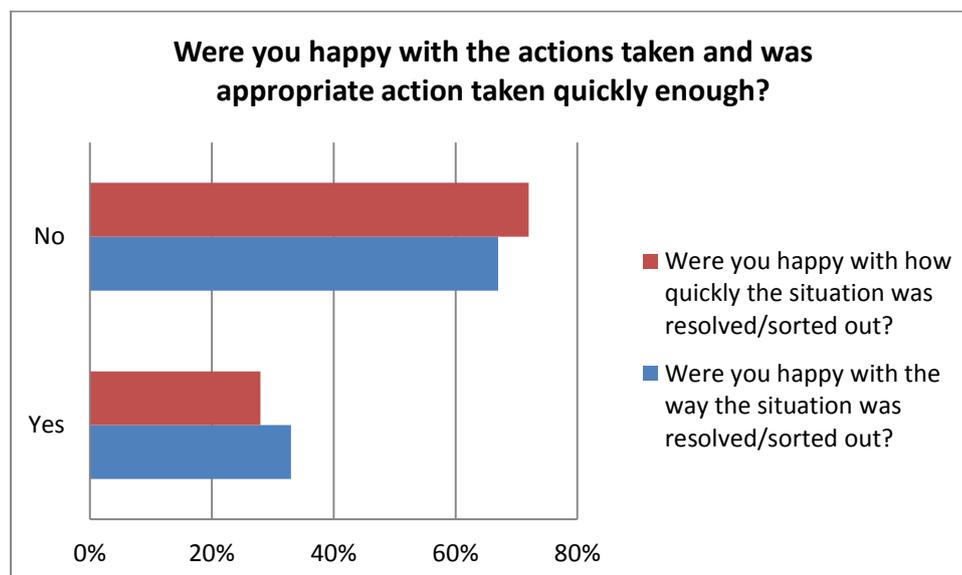
The percentage of parents who said their child was accused of bullying was much smaller than those who said their child had been bullied (see Q2); this may explain the small percentage of respondents to this question who said they spoke to the child's parents because their child was accused of bullying. 40% of parents who said their child had been accused of bullying selected "I spoke with the child's parent/s (my child was accused of bullying)" in response to this question.

In contrast, of the parents who said their child had been bullied (Q2), 27% selected "I spoke with the child's parent/s (my child was bullied)" in response to this question.

We were surprised that very few respondents contacted Family Lives and that nobody rang the Family Information Service (now the Early Help Hub).

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Q10 We want to know whether you were happy with the actions taken to stop the bullying and whether you feel appropriate action was taken quickly enough. If there is anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences, please use the comments box at the bottom. If we quote something you tell us, we will remove anything which might possibly identify you or your family (for example: names, location, the exact age of your child, names of schools or groups). If you have suggestions of ways to support families affected by bullying or have anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences, please use the comments box below.



Only 28% of respondents were happy with how quickly the situation was resolved; 33% of respondents said they were happy with the way the situation was resolved. 73% of people who answered this question wrote comments.

Question	Yes	No
Were you happy with the way the situation was resolved/sorted out?	33%	67%
Were you happy with how quickly the situation was resolved/sorted out?	28%	72%

73% of people who answered this question wrote comments to tell us more about their experiences or to give suggestions for possible improvements. We have attempted to separate them into three themes (which run through these comments), suggestions, other comments and an observation.

Identified themes:

Theme 1 - Bullying was not taken seriously or that no action or ineffective action was taken by people in charge when they were told of bullying taking place:

“School at the time were very unsupportive and gave my child a card to fill in every time they were bullied!”

“The school didn't do anything at all.”

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"School were unsupportive even when my child had a physical injury."

"School did not help so removed child from school"

"I spoke to my child's teachers a few times, they said my child was too sensitive and they thought the name calling and teasing wasn't serious. They wouldn't listen to us that the constant "low level" name calling, teasing and laughing at my child was a problem [for the child]. In isolation one incident wouldn't be a problem but the bigger daily picture was. "

"The Police dealt with the child who [description of cyberbullying] quickly and adequately but it was the school we had issues with."

"I think school staff and pupils need to understand that if someone is purposely doing something to provoke a negative reaction and upset someone then this is bullying. My child doesn't like people in their space or like loud noises; when children at school know this and continually do things to provoke emotional outbursts I consider it a form of bullying. It causes my child stress and anxiety but the school don't treat it as bullying."

"Just seemed like after the initial problem was flagged up & dealt with, there was a constant stream of low level emotional bullying that seemed to go unnoticed by school teachers."

"When I tried to talk to the teachers for advice they were patronising and blamed us. They suggested my child had a bad home life and in the same meeting said we were clearly a very loving, supportive family. It felt like they thought that was a problem too. Basically it was nothing to do with them."

"The tutor's reluctance to do anything about it was appalling, we really should have complained [about the tutor's lack of action] but were just glad that we found another activity our child enjoyed in a group where they had no problems (which showed it wasn't our child that was the problem in the first group because in the second they were accepted ... and made friends easily)... We don't know if they went on to treat any other child the same way, but the tutor didn't try to resolve it at all other than to make us and our child feel worse."

"The boys who did what they did to my child were apparently yet again looking for them in the playground only a matter of days ago, of which I was not informed about. It was my child who mentioned this to me whilst at home. We have a [care professional] and I reported this incident had happened at the school; when they [the care professional] spoke with the Head Teacher he is reported to have said that no such thing happened and clearly from the [care professional's] point of view it seemed that I was making a mountain out of a mole hill."

"The school did not act when my child reported the problem twice but did act when my friend (a retired schoolteacher) got involved."

"School's interventions were ineffective and still have not resolved the issue after 2 years so now I have to move my child!"

"I do not believe that all teachers or headteachers take bullying seriously enough, despite all the media attention and efforts to change this. There also appears to be very little schools can do/are willing to do to discipline pupils who are disruptive in lessons and misbehave in school. This gives them the message that

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their behaviour will go unpunished and the bullied child the impression that their feelings and experiences are not being taken seriously."

"Both children involved [at groups] had additional needs (ASD/ADHD). Each time I spoke to the mother [of the child] and both of them just said that their child had problems. This seemed to be their excuse for not intervening effectively or even accepting that their child was bullying another. My child is also on the autistic spectrum so I could empathise with the parents - but I do not accept that my child should suffer because of another family's failure to address their child's behaviour."

"The child who had been doing the bullying was not dealt with or punished appropriately. It can be frustrating for parents when these things are not taken seriously enough. My friend's child was fortunate in that the school move was a very positive one for her."

"Complained to head teacher, was lied to, said bullies were dealt with made it worse. Finally my child left the school, went to high school; the bullying started again to the point my child tried to commit suicide. They never went back to school."

"Child was accused of being bully in previous school at times, but autistic and mismanaged by staff in 3 different schools. This school manage [MY CHILD] well, but the other 3 in class are unpredictable and can be very aggressive and quite violent."

"I felt that the first teacher did not really see the bullying as an issue and did not take what was happening with my child very seriously. When I went directly to the Headmaster he was very supportive and I appreciated all the efforts made by him. If I hadn't have taken a number of steps myself ([martial arts classes] etc) I think things might have got worse for my child. Unfortunately the main bully has now moved on to another child. I have informed the school but the problem has not gone away."

"My child was bullied on more than one occasion at all three schools, First, Middle and High Schools. When you spoke to staff at the schools they always denied it saying that their schools had a "No Bullying Policy" and we do not tolerate bullying and staff would club together if the issue was about a member of staff. The worst episode and the one that went on for the longest was at High School, despite talking to staff having regular meetings it went on for almost a year both inside and outside of school. On one occasion [description of bullying behaviour]... this resulted in some shouting and a member of staff came out ... into the corridor and said 'Take it somewhere else, we are trying to have our lunch'. When I spoke to the Head of Year he said 'That wouldn't happen, staff would have dealt with it properly.'"

"Parent Partnership were excellent with the practical support but could only do so much as the school denied there was a problem."

"When my children moved to High School I wasn't notified of any incidents and only found out about a lot of the bullying later. My child, who has ADD and Aspergers, wasn't given the level of support they needed at High School."

"The police said they could not help unless I could provide them with detailed information about the bullies i.e. names and addresses at least. As these are street gangs, we have no idea who they are or where they live. We could not therefore provide the information and did not therefore get any support. There are no police street patrols during the afternoons and weekends, when the problem is at its highest level."

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"After an incident where [description of verbal and physical bullying by more than 10 children affecting more than one child], we kept the children away from school; we had a meeting and action was actually taken to the children involved. ... I was aware of the bullying by text and on the internet, and we spoke to the police about it, who were very helpful as to what we should do about keeping records and details etc; they told us to keep school informed, but they weren't interested as it was outside school as far as they were concerned although some texts were sent at school."

"We moved our child to an independent school which allegedly dealt with [such] children (with learning and emotional difficulties) but again [our child] became the target of a particular child and although the school did take steps to minimise the contact between my child and the bully they did not resolve the issue and take sufficient steps in order to prevent further injuries. We have now chosen to home-educate as child is totally school phobic and had not progressed in their learning for the last 3 years. [Our child] is now thriving in a supportive, emotionally stable environment and able to learn."

"At school ... the other children would form a circle and push my child about from one to the other and tip belongings out of their bag. An adult never seemed to be around to see this, or if they were they did not act upon it."

"Just seemed like after the initial problem was flagged up and dealt with, there was a constant stream of low level emotional bullying that seemed to go unnoticed by school teachers."

"My child has special educational needs In mainstream school they were bullied horrendously, blamed by the other children and labelled a naughty child by teachers and other parents. ... was being physically assaulted on a regular basis by a particular group of children, verbally provoked by other children in the class and verbally attacked by other parents in the playground (as was I as the parent). There was a general misunderstanding despite our best efforts to help/educate and inform school of our child's difficulties, and although they acknowledged the information we and other experts provided they didn't actually deal with the underlying problems (bullying) and so our child became so terrified of school we had no choice but to remove them. "

"The Headteacher ... believes they do not have bullying at the school, therefore he did nothing about it."

"I don't feel the situation was ever sorted out and I was really disappointed. The problem was partly [ethnic minority] and no one seemed happy to tackle it in case this was seen as racist."

Theme 2 - The victim is expected to change, is punished or deprived of something they enjoyed rather than the bully's behaviour being tackled:

"My child's bullying affected our whole family and as their mother it caused me great distress as despite all my efforts and contact with the school I was not able to reassure them that they would be safe at school. I felt I had no choice but to remove my child and enrol them in another school."

"We weren't happy with the way it was sorted because the tutor did nothing about it and we felt our child was almost punished because they had to change activity in order to avoid the bullies."

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"They said my child had low self-esteem and an anger problem, they punished my child in front of the bullies who laughed at [my child] ... bottles stuff up and sometimes explodes after more bullying at afternoon break. My child didn't want to go to school any more."

"Three girls decided to ignore my child at a craft class - they ruled the roost so others joined in, making my child feel isolated. When I spoke with the tutor she did not want to speak to the girls or their parents and suggested that if my child changed the way that they spoke ([my child] was quiet and spoke softly) that maybe they would start including them."

"My friend was forced to move her child to another secondary school. The existing school did not take appropriate action when her child's bullying culminated in [physical harm]."

"Other parents were equally concerned but very negative about the possibility of getting any local support. Their only real suggestion was to keep the child indoors and out of harm's way as much as possible."

"The Police dealt with the child quickly and adequately but it was the school we had issues with. They did not act quickly enough and sympathetically enough regarding the trauma our child had been through and punished them further which has left [our child] insecure, lacking in confidence and self esteem."

"We solved the situation by finding another group for [our child] to attend; we felt it was wrong that [our child] should be made to change rather than the bullies. It was also wrong that they had to stop an activity they enjoyed but they weren't happy in the group."

"They did not act quickly enough and sympathetically enough regarding the trauma our child [victim of bullying] had been through and punished them further which has left them insecure, lacking in confidence and self esteem."

"People in charge should not make a victim feel worse by implying it's something about them that causes the bullying - they should deal with the bully's behaviour properly. It was sorted quickly because we made the decision (with our child) to find another activity."

"When we thought about it we realised our child was lovely the way they were and shouldn't have to change - it was wrong of the tutor to even suggest it (it sort of reinforced the bullies' behaviour and implied our child was at fault)."

The following comment was made in response to Q9 but illustrates this theme well:

"Nothing was done to the bully who then started goading our child, telling more lies, [threat of physical violence]. Finally our child could stand no more and told [the bully] to get on with it. Although we had a video showing that our child did not hit [the bully] (as they had said) our child still got excluded. The other child did not get punished at all. And so it went on."

This comment was made in response to Q8:

"The teacher told our child's friends he would do everything in his power to stop them being with our child. Was threatening and treated our child like the problem rather than the victim."

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Theme 3 - Good practice and good outcomes:

"I have always found communication between school and myself ... to be very good and I was so pleased with the way this was sensitively dealt with because at [my teenage child] was worried about repercussions of anyone knowing they had asked for help."

"Issues on bus to and from school. On all occasions school dealt with it straight away and spoke to the group of children causing issues and handled it so both myself and child were happy."

"I found the support from Primary School was excellent."

"Have meeting with head next week They all are saying they really want to get situation right."

"I spoke to the nursery afterwards, and they said that they weren't aware of the child ever bullying other children, but they said they would keep an eye on how they interacted together after the incident. I have never heard anything from them to indicate that there is still a problem, and my child likes attending nursery so hopefully the problem was a one-off situation."

"School were very supportive and quickly dealt with the issue in a suitable manner."

"I emailed the head of year and CC'd in all class teachers involved, giving a full account of everything being said or done. The same day the situation was dealt with very thoroughly, my child [teenager] was (discreetly) given an apology by head of year and staff for not recognising the distress, I was phoned by school to assure me the bully was dealt with. The bully in question was being monitored ... so with this they were finally given temporary exclusion. The classes were all moved around so my child didn't have to sit by the bully again without it being obvious that it was because of my child's complaint."

This comment was made in response to question 8:

"School has settled down in the last few months due to a Deputy Head who has stopped the bullying."

Suggestions:

"I would have found it useful to have an impartial contact at the school who could liaise and offer emotional support."

"I think it is good to have intergenerational discussions about bullying as it makes the child see it isn't anything they have done but something that has been happening for years and years."

"Schools need to get right to the root of the problem when these things occur and provide emotional support for the child who has been bullied. Bullying can ruin childhoods."

"Any child sent out of county by 'County' should have a proper responsible approach to assessing if right choice made for child. Should be fully accountable and review sooner than (eg) statement review, which was a full 12 months in child's case. County paying, so should have process of overseeing school, staff, educational matters, care matters, and peers' issues."

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“Continue to monitor the situation even when you think it has stopped and always have a listening ear for your child and encourage the child to talk about their day whenever possible.”

“There should be a written procedure to deal with bullying and it should be adhered to. All adults involved should be brought together to discuss ways forward. If necessary, mediation offered. “

“An outstanding school should lose its status for allowing bullying to continue in their school. Schools should not cover up or pretend events have not happened, just to look good. A child's welfare should come first, not the school. A parent should not feel their only option to protect their child is to withdraw them from school. A separate room should be provided for those children who are feeling vulnerable to chill and talk and relax away from class. In those areas where parenting skills may need support then classes offered.”

“We think there should be more training for Teachers and particularly Head Teachers on cyber-bullying in order that they might be able to support a child who has been through such a tragic, horrifying event. It should involve how it makes the child feel, what feelings it evokes in them, eg it's their fault, they feel dirty ... and what they can do to stop it - e.g. be curious - why is this child behaving differently, what has provoked this kind of behaviour and above all else when they ask for it, listen to the child!!”

“Head teachers need to see that bullying by the adults who are supposed to be looking after the children there, does go on. They should have a procedure in place if a parent says this is happening, for example, that the parent, the adult in question, and the head have a meeting together in the first instance.”

“The staff in the schools need to take bullying seriously and act upon it, not hide behind their bullying policy. School transport could be better policed to stop the action carrying on for the journey home. “

“I would advise any parent going through this with a child to contact the head of year or head of school this way it is dealt with from the top and cascaded down so everyone is in the loop.”

Parents need more help to support their children and specific anti bullying training should be mandatory for school staff and youth workers. I think schools should be required to record incidents of bullying and publish the results. They would then work harder to prevent it!

Just keep fighting, never give up, however hard you want to give up.

Other comments from parents included the following:

“The bullying started in first school, it started again in middle school we took the felon at that school to a new one. Then the kids who bullied our child in first school were there.”

“The situation has not resolved. Bullying has been going on since reception. My child is now finishing year 2 [summer 2013].”

“My child was made to feel an outcast for having a different interest to the [other children]. This was never celebrated as a talent in its own right, ignorance from pupils persisted.”

“We were told because we didn't go to the local church then we weren't a good Christian family.” [parent of bullied child]

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"I later found out that other parents had complained about the child and they had been asked to supervise/control them better (so they had not attended because they couldn't/wouldn't control [the child]). ... the mother just didn't seem to accept that she needed to do something about her child's behaviour for their sake as much as anybody else's."

"It's not always easy to sort things as quickly as we would like as parents - sometimes a parent can have suspicions that things may not be quite right but that may not be bullying per se. There is a fine balance between intervening and giving a child time to sort things themselves. I therefore feel unable to answer the above question."

"I think parents whose child is accused of bullying do not accept that they are doing so - maybe because it is hard to define what is/isn't bullying. However, both these children behaved in an unacceptable way to my child - their confidence in groups suffered because of both these children."

"Other parents were equally concerned but very negative about the possibility of getting any local support. Their only real suggestion was to keep the child indoors and out of harm's way as much as possible. ... We have partially resolved the problem by having an adult accompany the child whenever the bullies are on the streets. This is a great inconvenience but it is better to be safe than sorry."

"My priority had to be my child as they were not functioning by then and had to be referred to Child mental health at the hospital."

"In the first instance we only attended the group for a short while and when the bully realised there was always someone watching he gave up trying to physically bully my child. In the second instance we again kept a close eye on our child and my partner intervened and told off the bully - who then verbally abused my partner!"

"[My child] has ongoing problems and this has just come to light as they have been working ... and enjoyed it; but now one of the people associated with the bullies has come to work there, [my child] is struggling to the point they have gone back on medication."

An observation:

Parents generally know their own children best and may suspect that something is wrong; however, sometimes children do not want to tell their parents that they are being bullied or that they have been accused of bullying. It is difficult for parents and carers to act if they don't know what is going on! The following comments (from different respondents) illustrate this quite well:

"I just wish my child hadn't left it for months before telling me the problems they were having."

"My child hadn't told me everything that was happening to them" (response to Question 8).

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Our Conclusions

The majority of parents and carers feel they need information and/or support when their child is affected by bullying (see Question 7).

Many parents and carers do not know where to find information and/or support (see Question 7).

Parents and carers who responded to this survey seemed unaware of Worcestershire's Family Information Service/Early Help Hub, though many did contact Parent Partnership.

Parents and carers usually turn to teachers when a child is affected by bullying; however, the effectiveness of doing this varies greatly.

Some anti-bullying policies are effective, others are not; we think that any anti-bullying policy should state that bullying is unacceptable and this should translate into actions.

Bullying can be difficult to identify and may not be taken seriously.

Some children and young people endure bullying for months or years (see Question 4); this is clearly unacceptable.

Things we learned from conducting the survey

While publicising the survey we spoke with people, asked if venues could display posters, tweeted about the survey and also sent details to some community newsletters. We found that attitudes varied. One newsletter editor wouldn't include details because the survey wasn't "local" enough (though one of our members counted 5 items in the July edition which were for events outside the village), two others were very happy to include details.

It seemed some people believed that if a venue displayed a poster about the survey it might imply bullying took place there. At one location a committee member was told "We're part of ..., we have a bullying policy" (the poster was accepted but we don't know if it was displayed).

A few people thought too much is made of bullying and that it is preparation for working life. Some thought that it has always happened and nothing can be done.

There are some parents who we know could have taken part but chose not to. One parent commented that they didn't want to "get them [the school] in to trouble".

Some of the people who offered help in publicising the survey said they wanted to do so because they had been bullied during childhood. Others wished us well and commented that the survey was a great idea - because they had been bullied during childhood.

Bullying in childhood seems to affect people even when they are adults.

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Appendix B - Useful websites and contact numbers

We have compiled a list of some links and phone numbers which may be useful for parents.

http://archive.beatbullying.org/dox/help/top_tips_for_parents.html

Beat Bullying's tips for parents

<http://familylives.org.uk/>

Family Lives website (with link to Bullying UK)

Family Lives helpline number: 0808 800 2222

<http://www.kidscape.org.uk/parents-carers/>

Kidscape parents' section about bullying

<http://www.kidscape.org.uk/resources/useful-links/bullying/>

Kidscape anti-bullying helpline for parents: 08451 205 204

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/education-welfare/anti-bullying-the-next-steps.aspx>

Worcestershire County Council's anti-bullying website which includes -

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/early-intervention-support/anti-bullying-the-next-steps/information-for-parents-etc.aspx> (information for parents)

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/pdf/PPsStopBullying.pdf>

Parent Partnership "Stop Bullying" leaflet

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/family-advice-and-support.aspx>

Worcestershire's Early Help Hub

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/family-advice-and-support/plugin-and-play/health-and-wellbeing/safety-and-bullying.aspx>

Early Help Hub Safety page

<http://worcestershire.whub.org.uk/cms/pdf/Next%20Steps-AB-Support-Resources-List.pdf>

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/family-advice-and-support/family-information/factsheet-library.aspx>

Early Help Hub factsheets page

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Appendix C - Notes

About Parents' Voice

We are a voluntary group of Worcestershire parents and carers. Membership is free and open to all parents, carers and parent groups in the county. There are no paid staff; we have a small committee and we do everything in our "spare" time when we are not busy raising our children and working outside the home!

As parents in Worcestershire, we want the county to be a great place for our children and young people to grow up in; we believe services for families work better when they are involved in shaping them.

Parents' Voice aims to promote genuine involvement of parents across services in Worcestershire by

- championing issues that are important to parents.
- informing and thereby empowering all parents
- representing as many different parents and their viewpoints as possible
- encouraging open and honest engagement with parents
- promoting respect and clear communication between parents and decision makers.

If you would like to join us, please visit the "Contact us" page of our website (www.parentsvoice.co.uk) or send an email to info@parentsvoice.co.uk telling us you would like to join.

Background to the survey

During a discussion we realised that there is one memorable piece of advice given to children and young people about what to do if they are bullied – to tell someone. However, there is no one piece of advice for parents and carers who may be that "someone" that the child confides in. We wondered where Worcestershire parents found support and information, whether they found it easily and whether they had any comments or suggestions about making possible improvements.

Once the idea had been born, it grew! We felt that the information and support needed might differ according to the child's age and the form of bullying. We also realised that parents of children accused of bullying need information and support, as do those whose children witness bullying. In our publicity material we deliberately used the phrase "affected by bullying in any way".

We made no promises about what we could achieve with the survey. We decided that we wouldn't conduct the survey with a particular aim other than discovering whether parents needed information and support and where they found it in Worcestershire. What we planned to do about it would depend entirely on what they told us; we were contacted by some organisations who were interested in the results and we agreed that we would share the report with them and talk with them after the survey was closed. Future developments will be covered in our newsletters and should be on our website!

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Editorial notes

To encourage parents and carers to take part we kept the survey quite simple. There were only 10 questions, though some had more than one part to them; some were optional, so the number of respondents for a few of the questions is less than others. Many questions involved selecting just one option, others allowed people to tick more than one option.

At the end of the survey we gave parents the chance to write details of their experience, to tell us what they had found particularly useful or to give suggestions for improvements. Completing the survey could literally take a few minutes if somebody gave the bare minimum of information, but it could take longer if they chose to tell us more.

We promised to treat the information in confidence and to remove or change anything that we felt could identify a family, such as a name or location; we have endeavoured to do that. Many parents said similar things so it's possible someone may believe another respondent's comment is theirs! We want to thank everyone who took part in the survey and entrusted us with their information and very personal stories.

Parents made many comments; we have included so many because they tell the stories behind the figures. Each child who is affected by bullying is an individual, not a number or a statistic. Parents' comments are probably the most important part of this report. Sometimes a comment is grammatically incorrect or may read a little strangely because of changes we have made to prevent identification; we apologise for that.

Generally we have changed "son", "daughter", "boy" or "girl" to "child"; where we have cut comments you may see a number of dots (...). If we have changed a word or added something to make a reference clear it will be in square brackets []. The illustrations in Appendix A show the frequency that words appear, both in individual questions and overall; the original text of comments is used in all these pictures.

We have used percentages throughout this report because we feel this conveys the relative size of respondents choosing each answer (the meaning of static numbers can be interpreted differently according to the reader's perception of what is a small or large number). We do not want *any* parent's experiences to be dismissed; what parents and carers told us should be taken very seriously because so many of the things they wrote about should never happen to even one child, parent or family!

Percentages have generally been rounded up or down to the nearest figure – eg: 94.92 % is rounded up to 95%. One exception to this is Question 7 where rounding up two figures of 25.5% would have resulted in 101%! Sometimes we have analysed other answers or comments made by a particular group of responses – and refer to the percentage of people who responded in that way (eg: Question 7).

The charts and percentages for each question generally relate to the number of respondents to that particular question. The one exception is Question 1 where we have used the total number of respondents to the survey³. (For any compulsory questions the number of respondents to that particular question is the same as the total number of respondents to the survey.)

³ In total, 59 people took part in the survey