

20 November 2006

EAGLE TELLS YOUNG PEOPLE NOT TO BE 'BULLYING BYSTANDERS'

Education Minister, Maria Eagle, today said that increased collaboration between young people, schools, key agencies and Government will help tackle the scourge of bullying in schools.

The Minister, speaking at the start of UK anti-bullying week, said: **“The theme of this year’s Anti-Bullying week, ‘Don’t be a Bystander’, underlines the fact that everyone has a role in tackling school bullying.**

“My Department is committed to ensuring that all schools create an anti-bullying culture amongst all pupils and staff. Among other things, it has helped establish and fund the Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum, a group of voluntary and statutory bodies working together to address the issue and has funded a dedicated bullying helpline through Childline.

“Government, however, cannot solve this problem in isolation and that is why all stakeholders, including young people, must become involved in working towards a solution.”

The Minister paid tribute to the work of the office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) in developing new guidelines to promote the involvement of pupils in anti-bullying school policies and said: **“The NICCY guidelines, developed in close collaboration with children and other agencies, will provide practical advice on involving pupils in devising and implementing measures to tackle bullying in schools.**

“Any effective response to bullying must begin with pupils and if they are not part of identifying and dealing with the problem, there will be no effective solution to the problem.”

“Bullying has no place in our schools or youth clubs and it is by working together we signal to bullies that we will not be bystanders, by sharing good practice and developing effective approaches to bullying we equip pupils, parents, school staff and all who work with and for children and young people ‘not to be bystanders’ and to be actively involved in being part of the solution.”

A series of events marking Anti-Bullying week, will be taking place throughout Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK between the 20th and the 24th November. It is being organised locally by the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, of which the Department of Education is a member.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The NIABF was launched a year ago and consists of representatives of Save the Children, Childline (NI), the Parents Advice Centre, the five Education and Library Boards, Barnardos, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Teachers Representatives, Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, Rainbow, NCH, Children’s Law Centre, Disability Action, Contact Youth and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.