

## A ChildLine Information Sheet

# Racism

*"I want to move house. I'm mixed race and a gang of girls keep punching me and taking my money. Mum has contacted the council but nothing's happened." Sylvia, 12*

Racism is treating someone differently or unfairly simply because they belong to a different race or culture. People can also experience prejudice because of their religion or nationality.

One person can act in a racist way or a group of people or a whole community of people can be racist.

Racism can be expressed in many different ways. These can include:

- being called names
- being teased, insulted or threatened
- being hit, pulled, pinched or kicked
- having your bag, mobile phone or other possessions taken
- being ignored or left out
- being forced to do things you don't want to do
- having your things or home damaged.

Racism can have a terrible effect. Children and young people can become lonely, isolated, angry and depressed. They may lose self-confidence and become terrified of going to school or going out alone. To avoid racism, they may keep away from situations where racist behaviour occurs and pretend to be ill, play truant from school, or be scared to leave their house.

### How does ChildLine help?

*"ChildLine is great. You can talk about what you want and it's just between you and them." John, 13*

Each year ChildLine receives over 500 calls and letters from children about racist bullying, and about 50 calls and letters from children who experienced other forms of racism.

ChildLine takes children's and young people's problems seriously, giving them a chance to talk in confidence about their concerns or worries, however large or small.

Children and young people are given direct help, advice and support on the helpline. In some situations, the ChildLine counsellor can put a young person in touch with social services, the police, or some other place where they can receive help.

ChildLine has a policy of confidentiality. ChildLine counsellors will not pass on any information about a caller to anyone else and all conversations are private. ChildLine will only break confidentiality if the young person or someone else they talk about is in a life-threatening situation.

Children and young people trust ChildLine, as it is anonymous and confidential. Being able to speak in confidence about serious problems such as racism, bullying or abuse may also help to prevent young people doing something that will cause them pain or harm.

ChildLine is free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

# Racism

## Why are people racist?

*"I'm the only Asian person in my class and used to get picked on for my colour, but I dealt with it. I feel now though that it's made me racist against white people. I hate myself for it. I just wish people from different races would leave each other alone."* Shireen, 15

Unfortunately racism exists in all races and cultures. Racists can feel threatened by anyone who is from a different race or culture, or they may just be intolerant and pick on anyone who is different from them.

We are not born racist. Our views and beliefs develop as we grow up. If a child or young person grows up within a racist family, or has friends who are racist, they may believe that racism is normal and acceptable.

Prejudice of any kind is often based on ignorance and fear of anything unfamiliar.

## Challenging racism

*"They bully me because of my colour. They call me racist names, hit me and make comments about my family. The hitting hurts, but the words hurt more. My dad has suggested that I punch the bullies. I think this will make things worse though, as the bullies are very popular. The whole school could end up hating me."* Nat, 12

Racism is against the law and should not be accepted under any circumstances. The Government has put anti-racist laws into place to protect all members of the community. In many schools young people and teachers work together to produce anti-bullying policies, which include sections on racist bullying.

## I'm being bullied. What should I do?

*"We recently moved from Liverpool to Glasgow and I keep being picked on because of my accent. They swear at me and push my head down the toilet. I've told my parents and the teachers, but they've done nothing to help."* Chris, 14

You should not feel ashamed. It's not your fault, but it is important you get help. No one deserves racism.

You should find someone to talk to – maybe a friend or someone at your school, like a teacher. They may be able to tell you what you can do about it

or help you decide what to do next. Try and keep yourself safe. For instance, you could walk home with someone you know rather than on your own.

## How can racism be stopped?

*"I get really annoyed that lots of people at my school are racist towards Asians. I'm not Asian, but have friends who are. My family doesn't like Asian people."* Mandy, 14

If you see racism, report it. Don't ignore what happens. Let the person suffering racism know that you've seen what's going on and let them know you are concerned.

Encourage the person experiencing racism to tell someone.

## What does the law say about racism?

Racist incidents, ranging from harassment and abuse to physical violence, are against the law.

Encouraging others to be racist – known as 'inciting racial hatred' – is also a criminal offence.

Racist things in newspapers or on TV, radio or the internet break media codes of practice. If you believe you have seen anything racist – in an advert or a story or something similar – you can make a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission at [www.pcc.org.uk](http://www.pcc.org.uk) or the Office of Communications at [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 made it illegal to discriminate against a person at work, in education and housing. It is also against the law to treat anyone differently because of their colour when providing goods and services, like shopping and home repairs. The Race Relations Order 1997, which applies to Northern Ireland, covers the same issues.

If someone does believe they have suffered racism, they have the right to bring their complaint before an employment tribunal or a court.

# Racism

## **Further information and advice**

### **Britkid**

This is a website about race, racism and life – as seen through the eyes of the Britkids.  
Website: [www.britkid.org](http://www.britkid.org)

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission**

A government organisation that aims to protect UK citizens from all forms of discrimination, including racism and sexism.  
Freepost RRLL-GHUX-CTR  
Arndale House, Arndale Centre  
Manchester M4 3EQ  
Tel: 0845 604 6610  
Website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### **Equality Commission Northern Ireland**

Equality House  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square  
Belfast BT2 7DP  
Tel: **02890 500600**  
Website: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

# Racism

ChildLine is a service provided by the NSPCC.

Registered charity numbers 216401 and SC037717.

**Please note** – all names and identifying details have been changed to protect young people's identities.

© NSPCC Nov 2007



## CONTACTING CHIDLIN E

Children can call ChildLine on **0800 1111** (all calls are free of charge, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year).

Or write to us at ChildLine, Freepost NATN1111, London E1 6BR; or visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Children who are deaf or find using a regular phone difficult can try our textphone service on **0800 400 222**.  
Monday to Friday 9.30am to 9.30pm  
Saturday to Sunday 9.30am to 8.00pm

We have a special helpline for children and young people living away from home in places such as refuges, boarding schools and young offenders' institutions called The Line on **0800 88 4444**.  
Monday to Friday 3.30pm to 9.30pm  
Saturday to Sunday 2.00pm to 8.00pm

ChildLine in Partnership with Schools (CHIPS) helps schools set up schemes to encourage children and young people to support each other. For more information call **020 7650 3230**.