

SPEAK UP

#EndEverydayHate

2025



action on
prejudice

A young person's guide to
intervening in a hate crime situation



YouthLink
Scotland

Introduction

Who's it for?

This resource is intended to help young people understand how to safely intervene in situations where someone is the target of hate behaviour. It introduces our approach to being an Active Bystander, equipping young people with the skills and knowledge to take action.

This resource is aimed at young people and should be introduced as part of a wider education programme. Please refer to the workshop exercises and guidance on the website www.actiononprejudice.info

All actions recommended to young people should be considered in light of their age and stage and it is important to emphasise staying safe in any action that is taken.

We want to make Scotland a great place to live for everyone.

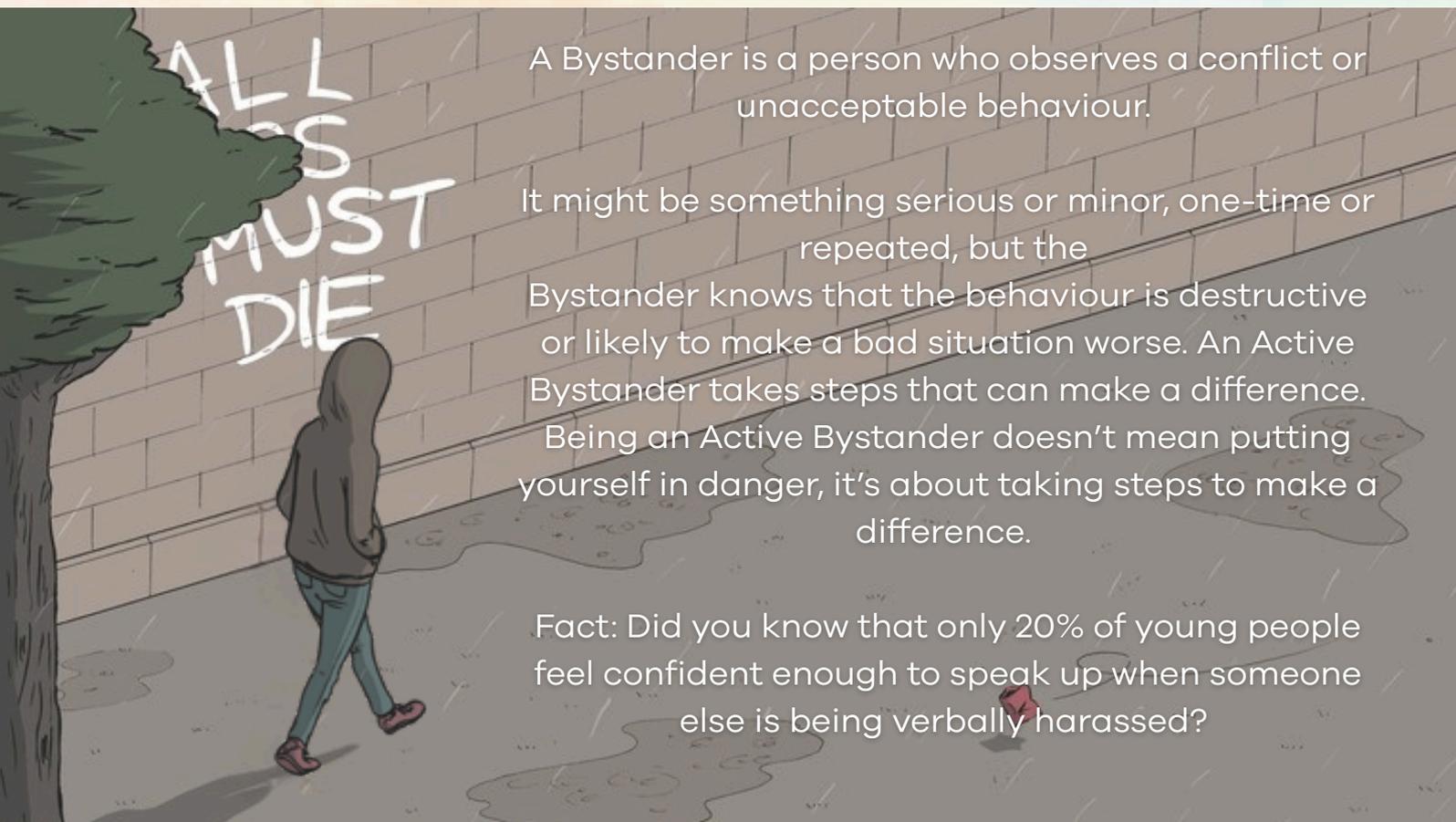
So Speak Up everyone and #EndEverydayHate

What is an active bystander?

A Bystander is a person who observes a conflict or unacceptable behaviour.

It might be something serious or minor, one-time or repeated, but the Bystander knows that the behaviour is destructive or likely to make a bad situation worse. An Active Bystander takes steps that can make a difference. Being an Active Bystander doesn't mean putting yourself in danger, it's about taking steps to make a difference.

Fact: Did you know that only 20% of young people feel confident enough to speak up when someone else is being verbally harassed?



What is Hate Crime?

What is Hate Crime?

Legal Definition

Targets of hate crime are harassed because of;

- Race
- Age
- Religion/belief
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender identity
- Variations in sex characteristics

Sometimes people may experience hate crime or be the target of hate behaviours because they face intersecting (more than one) features of the above. At the core of hate crime is an unhealthy power dynamic similar to those who bully others.

Hate crime is a term used to describe behaviour which is both criminal and rooted in prejudice. This means that the law has been broken, and the offender's actions have been driven by hatred towards a particular group. Hate crime has a hugely damaging and corrosive impact on victims, their families and communities.

Hate crime takes many forms, such as; assault; arson; criminal damage; incitement to hate; stealing; verbal abuse etc.

The person experiencing hate does not always need to be in one of these groups. We look at why the act or offence was committed and the perceptions of those involved.



Why is it important?



A history Lesson

At certain points in history, social and economic upheaval has led to more people hating others because of their differences. There are examples of times when intolerance has led to oppression and in extreme cases genocide. People always say it should never happen again.

Why is this relevant to me now?

The world is experiencing similar social and economic problems. In some places in the world, everyday hate is becoming normalised including Scotland. At this moment in history we have a choice to act. We want Scotland to be a safe, tolerant and fair society for everyone to live in.

So 'Speak Up' and #EndEverydayHate.

How to step up and make a difference

When you make a choice to speak up for someone experiencing hate behaviours, such as harassment, you have options to help you do so safely.

In previous versions of this resource we have used the 5D's of Bystander Intervention but here we will be combining these with the STEPS approach designed in consultation with young people.



An Active Bystander takes steps to safely make a difference when something isn't right. Every step can make a difference, helping everyone feel safe and included.

1. Step Up

Recognise the problem and intervene Directly.

A Direct intervention, where a person acts in the moment to address the hate behaviour they witness. This could involve calmly talking to the person causing harm or the person experiencing it. Only step up, take a direct approach, if you feel safe and it's appropriate to do so.

2. Tell An Adult

Get help from and Delegate to a trusted adult such as a youth worker or teacher.

Delegating to an adult or other responsible person can make a big difference. If someone's safety is at risk, reporting the issue – even anonymously through services like Fearless – can make a big difference. This isn't about grassing, it's about getting the right support for you and the person experiencing hate and harm.

Evidence

Take notes to Document what has happened, including what you saw, heard or know about the situation.

Be aware if you take photos or videos it can make things worse, upset the people involved, or spread hurtful content if shared. Filming might also make others feel unsafe and could get you into trouble. If the situation becomes a criminal investigation, the Police could confiscate your phone. Instead, focus on remembering or writing down what you saw and heard so you can explain it clearly if needed.

Pull Attention Away

Take the focus off the problem by Distracting the person causing harm or experiencing it and shift their attention to something safer.

This can de-escalate tension and create an opportunity to address the issue later in a safer environment. This could include changing a subject to something more positive or asking them to do something different with you.

Support Later

Delaying intervention until after the situation and checking in with the person later.

Checking in privately shows that you care and can help someone who has experienced harm feel supported in finding safer ways to cope. This could include offering support to report an incident, helping to call family or other responsible adults to support. Do not share personal information and numbers with someone you do not know.



Challenging a verbally abusive person can be scary, so it is worth thinking through the options of the 5 D's of Bystander Intervention and STEPS to help you plan what move you will make. There is no one method that is better than another and they don't need to be done in a certain order. A lot will depend on the situation you want to intervene in, as well as how confident you feel about intervening.

In the next section, we will show you a situation and 5 different methods of intervention. The priority must always be your own safety – **remember to stay safe!**



STEPS to being an active bystandander and the 5D's of Bystander Intervention



Step Up

Direct - Recognise the problem and intervene directly.

Tell An Adult

Delegate - Get help from a trusted adult such as a youth worker or teacher

Evidence

Document - Take notes of what has happened, including what you saw, heard, or know about the situation.

Pull Attention Away

Distract - Take the focus off the problem and shift their attention to something safer.

Support Later

Delay - Follow up and check in with the person experiencing hate after the situation.



Stepping into the Bystander Role

The Situation

You are on a bus and someone starts behaving aggressively with another passenger, referring to a perceived part of their identity.

Fortunately, this type of situation does not occur often, but when it does it can be very upsetting. Many people would like to intervene but do not know how to, or are afraid to take action in case the person causing harm turns on them.

What can you do?

Over the following pages we will explore a number of options that you could consider using STEPS and the 5D's of Bystander Intervention.



STEP UP: BE DIRECT

You have recognised the hateful and aggressive behaviour of another person towards someone else. In this situation it is easy to look away and feel uncomfortable or think it's not your place to get involved but if it's safe to do so, stepping up can make a huge difference.

What can you do?

- Can you find a way to ask the person to stop their behaviour without making the situation worse?
- Can you point out the impact their behaviour is having on other passengers on the bus?

What can you say?

- "Please stop, I'd appreciate it if you weren't racist/homophobic/transphobic/ableist/discriminatory."
- "Your behaviour is making me feel uncomfortable."
- "Stop! This behaviour is not acceptable."



You run the risk of escalating a situation if you are too emotional or spoiling for a fight.

Remember you can only speak for yourself and the way it makes you feel. "This makes me feel uncomfortable." Do not speak for the person experiencing harm, you do not really know how they are feeling.

Top Tip: If you are spoiling for a fight or feel angry at the behaviour of the person being abusive, then DO NOT intervene directly. You are likely to make the situation worse.

Another thought: If someone else takes direct action, you could consider backing them up.

TELL AN ADULT: DELEGATE

Sometimes the safest and most effective action you can take is to ask someone else to intervene. You can delegate to another person, such as an adult in a role of responsibility.



What can you do?

- You could ask an adult or someone in charge to intervene if you witness harassment. This could be a police officer, a teacher, a youth worker, a bus driver, a security guard, a ticket collector, a shop worker or whoever might be with you in a potential situation.
- You could call the police on 999 if the situation is an emergency and presenting danger to others.
- If you are on a train text British Transport Police on 61016.

What can you say?

- On the bus you could approach the bus driver to say "There is someone harassing another passenger aggressively on the bus"
- If calling the Police "I am on the number # bus on this street, someone is harassing another passenger on the bus and I am concerned for their safety."

When you are not confident in tackling the issue or need back up, this is a good option. You are still taking action and therefore making a difference.



Top Tip: You can appeal to more than one person to intervene. For example, "Could you phone the police while I tell the bus driver what is going on?"

EVIDENCE: DOCUMENT

Noticing and remembering key details can help ensure the right support is given. If you're concerned about someone experiencing hate but don't feel confident or safe to interrupt.

It might be tempting to take photos or videos, but this can make things worse, upset those involved, or even spread harmful content if shared. It could also make others feel unsafe and might get you into trouble. If the situation turns into a police investigation, your phone could be confiscated. Instead, focus on recalling details so you can explain them clearly if needed.

What can you do?



- Make a note of the key details of the situation, such as a description of the person causing harm.
- Pay attention to the language the person is using to be able to describe what the incident related to and if any hateful language was used.
- Write down a detailed description of what happened after the incident to include in a police report or statement or to report anonymously on Fearless.

It may not feel like you are doing a lot but any details that are shared can be very helpful in identifying someone should a police investigation take place.

Important note: If you do film something keep in mind that the police may need to take your phone as evidence for an unknown length of time.

Never post a video of an incident online as this could be illegal in some situations.



PULL ATTENTION AWAY: DISTRACT

You can distract attention away from the person experiencing harm.

What can you do?

- Address the person causing harm with a question or statement that has nothing to do with the situation.
- Sit next to the person experiencing harm and engage them in conversation about something unrelated.

What can you say?

- To the person causing harm; "Excuse me, do you know what the next bus stop is?" or "Do you know the time? I'm running late and my phone battery is down."
- To the person experiencing harm; "Hello, so nice to see you. How was work today?"



Distracting buys time and takes attention away from the person experiencing harm, it can give them time to get away if need be.

It is risky and you may not necessarily succeed in distracting the person causing harm.

Top Tip: If you are with a friend, then why not both go up and ask for directions? You can always pretend you are having a disagreement that needs resolving.



SUPPORT LATER: DELAY

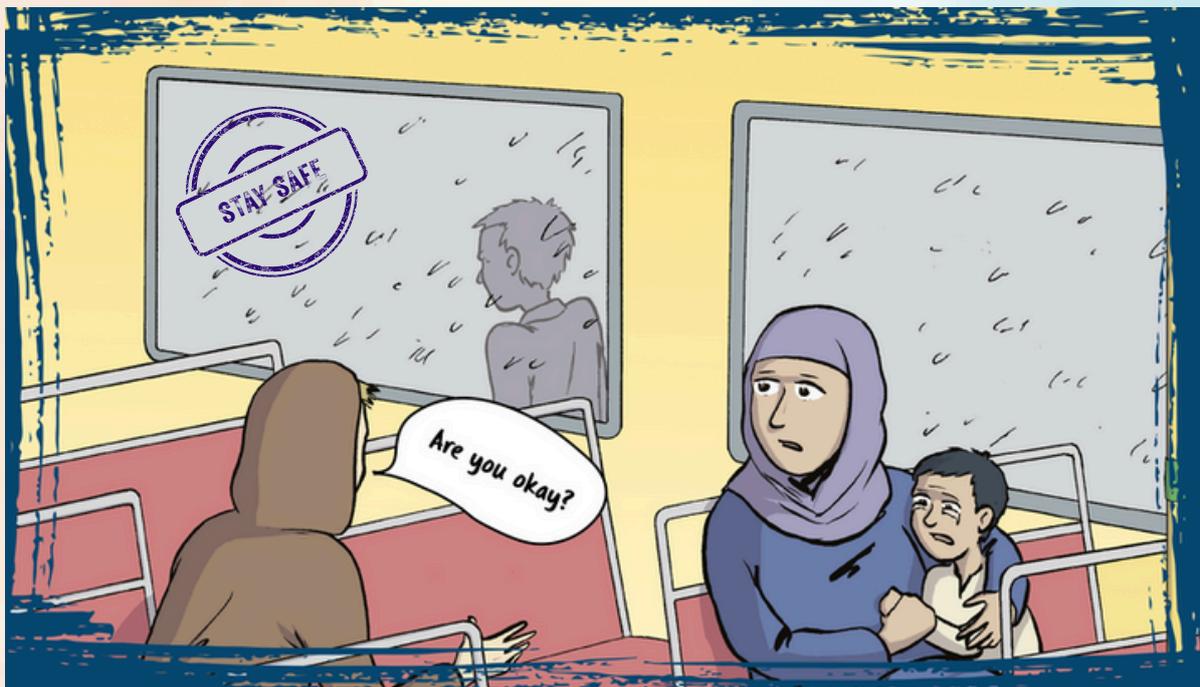
Sometimes, it's not safe or appropriate to step in at the time—but that doesn't mean you can't check in later. After a situation has passed, it's important to reach out and offer support.

What can you do?

- Check in with the person who has experience harm after the situation is over.
- Offer to report to Police if they would like to do this.
- Offer to wait with them until family or friends come to support them.

What can you say?

- "I'm sorry that happened, it is not ok, can I do anything to help you now?"
- "Can I help you report this incident to Police?"
- "Would you like me to stay with you until someone can come and support you?"



Take care: Do not share your own personal details with someone you do not know other than Police.

Top Tip: Whilst checking how the person experiencing harm is, remember to respect their right to privacy. For some cultures, this is especially important.

A word about the Banter

'Banter' is a Scottish word for the friendly and playful exchange of teasing remarks. However, it can sometimes be used as an excuse for being discriminatory.

Is it ever acceptable to name call? What if it is just a joke?

Casual and careless remarks that are offensive and bigoted (racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic etc.) seep into our culture and become 'normalised.'



This can make hate crime more, not less likely. It is okay to challenge remarks, jokes, and name calling that you think might be offensive. Banter should be fun, witty and smart. It should not discriminate against people.

Top Tip: Challenge to educate. The more people think about what they say, the less likely they are to use offensive language. Things are getting better in Scotland – let's not lose ground to bigotry.



Generational Differences

Sometimes you will experience generational differences – when parents and grandparents use inappropriate language it is because they are used to speaking about others in a certain way that was at one time much more acceptable. This applies to offensive language for all of the protected groups.

Times are changing though and people can be slow to adapt to change or have not been challenged much about their language before.



Top Tip: you can tell them it is not considered appropriate to use certain words anymore but it will have much more impact if you say that you personally do not like that use of language. It is never too late to learn.



PS: Not all parents and grandparents would use inappropriate language, some have helped move things forward in Scotland a great deal. Celebrate their achievements in contributing towards making Scotland a better place for everyone!

Online Hate

This can take several forms and escalate in seriousness. Hate can be easier to perpetrate online because of perceived anonymity, therefore it is a very particular problem and can be hard to challenge.

Memes and bad banter

These can sometimes be hard to interpret, as recently groups have realised that if they post offensive material hidden in a 'joke' then they have more chance of these memes being shared.

If you receive an offensive internet meme from an online acquaintance you can either **challenge** or **delete**.

If you are not really sure if something is offensive then it probably is. Play it safe and **delete**.

Trolling, Flaming & Cyberbullying

Trolls get a rise out of others by saying controversial things on social media.

Flaming is when someone says something offensive deliberately to start an argument online.

Cyberbullying online is particularly an issue for young people and can take the form of personal abuse, threats and sexual remarks.

Things can escalate quickly online as there are fewer social norms, whilst the consequences can be devastating for the victim. Online hate is real life hate and can be prosecuted if a victim is physically threatened.

If you witness online hate in the form of trolling, flaming and cyberbullying you can act by using the 5 D's of being an active bystander or STEPS.



**Step Up
Direct**

"That's offensive, please stop."

**Tell an Adult
Delegate**

"EG's getting grief online. I'm worried. Can you do something to help?"

**Evidence
Document**

"I took a screenshot because the online abuse was getting really serious."

**Pull Attention
Distract**

"Does anyone know what's on at the cinema this week?"

**Support Later
Delay**

"I saw the harassment you were receiving online. Are you okay? Do you want to talk through some options?"

Sites that incite hate

We are all entitled to voice our opinions and we have a right to free speech. However, this is not the case when our right to free speech gets in the way of basic human rights through preaching hate.

This is why a lot of places do not allow a platform for far right organisations and hate speech in particular. It is harder to police this online and we can occasionally come across websites that spread hate. Most of these are not illegal, but you can still report it to either the website administrator, the website hosting company, or the police if it offends, upsets or scares you or is likely to do so to others.



Reporting Hate

You can report a hate crime by the following routes;

By telling someone with authority, such as a teacher, a youth worker or an adult relative and asking them to report it.

By calling the police on 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency).

In person at any police station.

At 3rd Party Reporting Centres. In some cases, victims/witnesses of hate crime do not feel comfortable reporting the matter directly to the police and may be more comfortable reporting it to someone they are familiar with. This is called 3rd Party Reporting and happens at places where staff have been trained to assist a victim or witness in submitting a statement to the police and can make such a report on the victim/witnesses behalf. These places are often community centres or local groups.

Or you can report remotely on:

Crimestoppers www.crimestoppers-uk.org 0800 555 111

Fearless www.fearless.org

Or if the incident takes place on the railway, text 61016 to report to the British Transport Police.

Other useful numbers and websites if you are worried about yours or another's wellbeing, these website and organisations might be able to help or advise:

Childline www.childline.org.uk 0800 111

NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do 0808 8005000

CEOP www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

Disrespect NoBody www.disrespectnobody.co.uk

Resources and Activities

You can download more information from the Action on Prejudice website, including a number of activities and resources to use with other young people demonstrating the STEPS and 5 D's of intervention on hate crime.

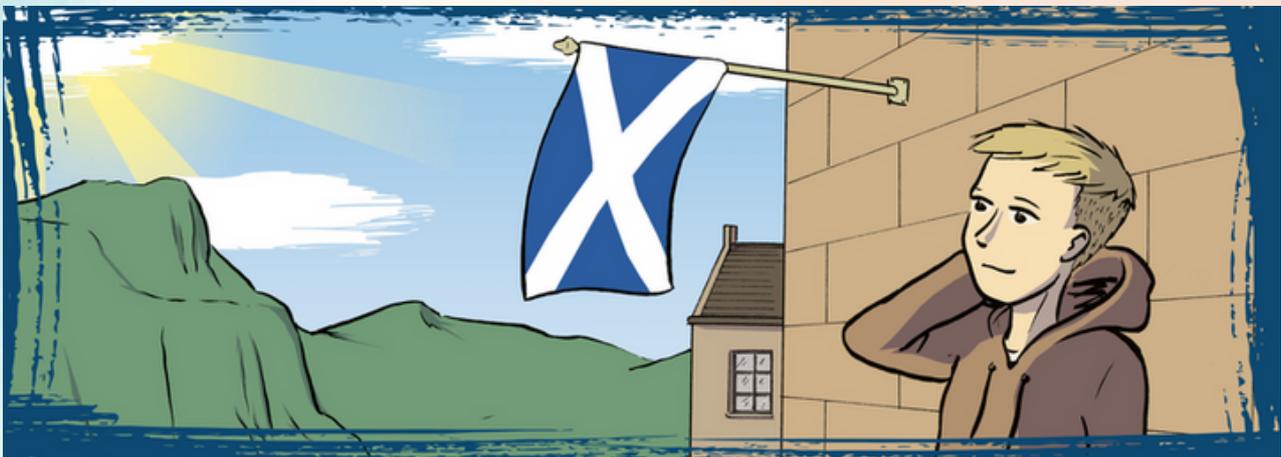
Remember to speak up and end everyday hate in Scotland.

Contacts:

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www.actiononprejudice.info

#EndEverydayHate



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