

BACKGROUND

- Parents have been described as the 'missing voice' in the bullying narrative (Sawyer et al. 2011). Positive parent child relationships have been suggested to act as a buffer from some of the harms of associated with bullying (Rudolph et al., 2020).
- While research on the impact of a child being bullied on their parents is limited, the available evidence highlights how parents can feel guilty for not being able to protect their child (Humphrey and Crisp, 2008), and how parents can report feeling hopeless, sad and angry (Lynch et al., 2015). Such evidence suggests that parents require advice and guidance on how to tackle bullying.
- From a socio-ecological perspective, effective relationships between parents and schools are crucial for tackling bullying behaviour and supporting those being bullied in schools.
- Anti-bullying policies provide a useful framework for communicating a schools' approach to tackling bullying (Kidwai and Smith, 2024). In England and Wales, it is a legal requirement for all state schools to have a policy that includes measures to prevent all forms of bullying in pupils (Gov.uk). Typically, the policy is decided by schools and should be communicated to all teachers, pupils and parents (Gov.uk).
- Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyse a sample of anti-bullying policies to examine the guidance provided to parents on bullying.

METHOD

Sample

- In total, 84 policies from schools in two local authority regions in the North of England were identified using local authority school directory webpages.
- An online search was conducted to search for each schools' anti-bullying policy.
- Policies were only included in the analysis if they were openly available online.

Procedure

- Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of York, Department of Education Ethics Committee.
- Based on Kidwai and Smith (2023) and guidance from the Anti-Bullying Alliance, five items were used to analyse the policies. The items included:
 - Does the policy mention direct reference to sharing definition with parents
 - Clearly mention the responsibilities of parents if they know of bullying (this can include knowing if their child has a behaviour problem if bullying is included elsewhere)?
 - Clearly mention consultation with parents about the policy?
 - Give advice for parents about bullying

Data analysis

- Quantitative content analysis was used to analyse the data.

KEY FINDINGS

As shown in Figure 1:

- Few policies included any guidance for parents about bullying.
- Regarding sharing the definition

Advice for parents

- The advice provided to parents in the policies varied greatly.
- The advice included:
 - Providing more advice on spotting the signs of a child being bullied.
 - Discussion with their parent/carers on whether police action is required.
 - Lengthy advice on how to support their child.

Sharing the definition with parents

- Of those policies which included a statement on sharing the definition of bullying with parents, the majority highlighted how the information would be shared via the policy online.
- One policy included a statement on including the definition in the parent handbook.

Consultation with parents

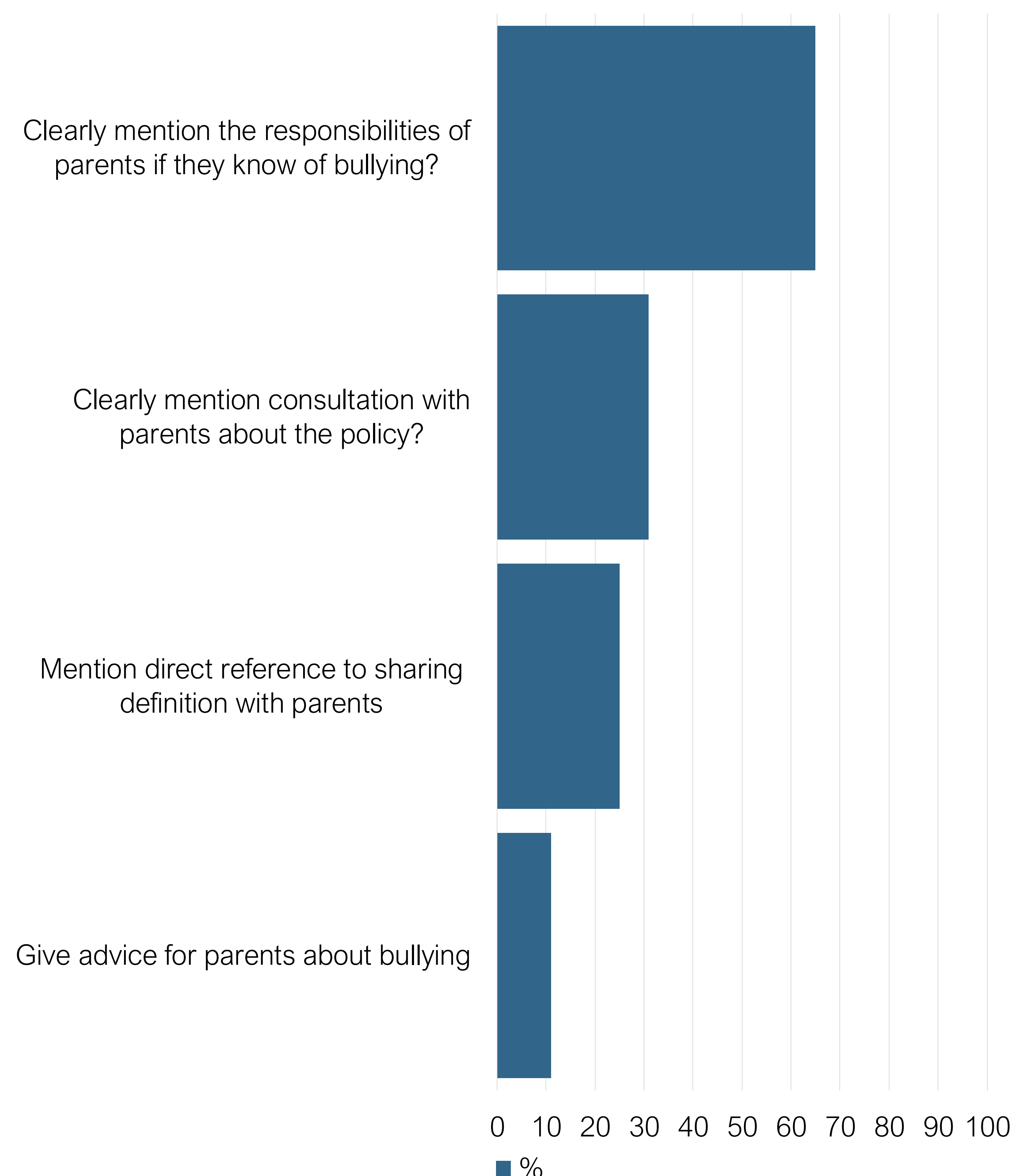
- The majority of policies which had mentioned consultation with parents really focused on consulting with parents regarding incidents of bullying involving their child.
- No policy made explicit reference to consulting parents during the development of the policy.

Responsibilities of parents

- The responsibilities of parents were clearly communicated in 65% of the policies.
- Such information included the responsibilities of reporting the incident(s) to the school, recording information on the incidents and sharing this with the school (e.g., who was involved, the nature of the bullying, and the location of the bullying).
- Five policies included a statement on how it is the responsibility of the whole school community (including parents) to tackle bullying.
- Three policies highlighted how parents should not '*take matters into their own hands*' and manage the bullying themselves.

Figure 1:

The percentage of school policies that included information and guidance for parents.



DISCUSSION



- Results indicated there is a gap in the dissemination of policy between schools and how they share that with parents.
- Advice for parents varies greatly between schools.
- Many of the included policies included a section on the responsibilities of parents in tackling bullying in school.
- The findings of the analysis so far, highlight the diversity in guidance for and consultation with parents.
- Given the impact of a child being bullied on parents, greater advice for parents would be beneficial for parents.
- Future research would benefit from examining what guidance parents may find helpful.



References

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