

## Understanding Cyberbullying

The emotional aspects of bullying can be devastating. Cyberbullying is bullying that happens online through social, gaming or instant messaging platforms.

### What is it?

Cyberbullying is bullying through electronic means eg social media, messaging on the internet, accessed on a mobile phone, tablet or gaming platform. The behaviour is usually repeated and at times can be as subtle as leaving someone out of a group chat or cropping them out of a picture. It can consist of:

- Threats and intimidation
- Harassment and stalking
- Defamation
- Rejection and exclusion
- Identity theft, hacking and impersonation
- Publicly posting or sending on personal information about another person
- Manipulation



## this issue

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## UK Internet Centre Advice on Cyberbullying

### Let children talk

Give them the space to share what they want to in their way and listen. Try to avoid the temptation to interrupt, prompt if necessary but let them do most of the talking.

### Don't be shocked by what your child tells you

If a child has built up the courage to seek help, they can be easily put off if they feel embarrassed or ashamed by the reaction they get. As parents, you may not always understand some of the things children do online, but it is still key to understand the underlying behaviour and support them with what happens next.

### Don't deny access to technology

Sometimes when children are warned about the dangers of the internet, they are worried that their device may be taken away from them. Reassure them that this won't happen if they speak up about something that has been worrying them online.

### Talk to the police

If you think that your child is in immediate danger, call the police. Equally, if there is a direct threat of violence or harm within any conversation then you may also wish to contact your local police for support. As parents, any incident involving children will be extremely emotive. The majority of bullying issues can be resolved satisfactorily with support from the school.

### Encourage them not to retaliate

Although this can seem like the most tempting thing to do, it's very important that you do not retaliate to the cyberbullying. Most of the time the person who is displaying bullying behaviour is looking for a reaction when they're teasing or calling someone nasty names. Your child may wish to reply and ask the person to stop sending messages however this is not necessary and action can be taken without replying.

### Save the evidence

It's important to keep the cyberbullying messages that a child has received, whether through taking screenshots or saving the messages on the device. Saving the messages allows you to have evidence when reporting the cyberbullying.

### Talk to the school

The school plays a vital role in the resolution of abusive online behaviours. We have anti-bullying and behaviour policies in place to prevent bullying and have a positive culture. Take the evidence of bullying and any additional details about the context of the situation and length of time it has been going on for.

It is helpful to discuss this with your child as you may want to speak to the school together.

## How to protect your child

- **Think before you post** – The choices we make online say something about who we are. Talk to your child about how the things they do online paint a picture of themselves - if they're not happy to wear it on their T-shirt they shouldn't post it
- **Be share aware** - Talk to your child about the risks of sharing e.g. identifying where they live or go to school, and what people online might do with that information. Talk about what the risks might be of sharing personal thoughts and feelings. And help your child stay safe on social networks, apps and games <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/>
- **Screen time** – Limit the time online by setting a 'Family agreement' see this version by Childnet: <http://www.childnet.com/blog/family-agreement>
- **Be a good role model** – Children learn by example. Make sure you are using the digital world in a positive way to teach them good habits
- **Get involved** - The best way to keep your child safe online is to take an active interest right from the start. They need your love and protection online as much as they do in the real world. Stay up to date and keep your child safe in today's digital world with NetAware: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

## What every parent and carer needs to know

Visit [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org) for loads of help and advice. For a parent and carer toolkit see <https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/parent-and-carer-toolkit>

**Broadband Parental Controls** – Your broadband provider has built-in controls.

See <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/> for step by step instructions <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/networks-wifi/>

### Research on children's use of social media

The children of today are growing up in a very different world compared to our generation.

Digital technology has become a fundamental part of children's lives.

- The average child posts **26 times per day** on social media
- **Only 6/10** of children's followers are friends in the real world. Meaning they have never met 4/10 of their followers
- Really complex; not built for children; not as regulated

Therefore it's imperative you get involved in your child's online activity and guide them through it safely.

The pace of change in technology is fast eg six year olds are as digitally advanced today as 10 year olds were just three years ago.

- **General browsing** – in 2013, 46% of 10 year olds used the internet for general browsing, in 2016 48% of 6 year old used the internet for general browsing
- **Instant message** – In 2013 31% of 10 year olds used the internet for instant messaging, in 2016 32% of 6 year olds use the internet for instant messaging
- **Social media** – in 2013, 32% of 10 years olds used social media, in 2016, 26% of 6 year olds use social media

*"This all shows a general trend for children becoming involved in the digital world at a younger than ever before"*

**The key elements of bullying are:**

- **Hurtful:** can use violence, hurtful words or ganging up to make another person feel helpless
- **Intentional:** make someone feel bad on purpose
- **Repetitive:** hurting another person or group - more than once
- **An imbalance of power:** making the other person or group feel weaker or more stupid than you



## How is Cyberbullying different?

- **Hard to escape** – Leaving the bullies behind in the school playground is no longer an option. The bullies are with you wherever your connected device is.
  - **24 hour access** – Children often check their devices through out the evening and sometimes during the night.
  - **Instantly reach a large audience** – Messages and images can be shared quickly via messaging or social media. The audience can quickly grow to people you don't even know
  - **Anonymity** - Some platforms allow you to stay anonymous. People often say things online they would not say in real life.
  - **Lots of repetition with likes and shares** – Can quickly spread outside the child's own network of friends. We have all seen videos or images that have gone "viral"
  - **Its hard to police** – Social media networks are not known for their quick responses to problems
- Another way to get involved is to teach your child to have good **internet manners**. You can download the guide on the internet matters website and share it with your children: <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/guidance/top-internet-manners/>
1. Treat people how you would like to be treated
  2. If you wouldn't say it to someone in person, don't say it online
  3. People can't see your body language, facial expressions or hear the tone of voice online
  4. Don't make situations worse by provoking people

## How to set up a safe social media profile

- **Use a strong password** – to avoid hacking
- **Use an alias and avoid personal pictures** – so your child cannot be easily identified
- **Don't include date of birth and other personal information like their school** - so your child cannot be easily identified
- **Show your child how to block and report** – in case they experience unwanted messages or bullying
- **Change settings to private** – to prevent strangers being able to become friends or send messages
- **Consider the minimum age** – age 13 for most social media platforms
- **Don't accept friend requests from strangers**
- **Switch off location services** – So your child's movements cannot be monitored
- **Tell them to think before they post** – think about who will see the information they post and what impact that might have

## Good Internet Manners

1. Don't start rumours by spreading gossip about someone
2. Don't make fun of someone in chat
3. Post things that will inspire and motivate people in a positive way
4. Make sure you don't create a negative environment, online world or game through name calling
5. Include people in online games and social forums and don't intentionally leave people out
6. You can't retrieve material once its sent or posted online so if it might embarrass you or someone else, don't put it online
7. Respect each other's privacy

