



ADVICE FOR PARENTS ON CYBERBULLYING

Who is this advice for?

This advice is for parents and carers about cyberbullying. It provides advice and information about how they can protect their child from cyberbullying and what to do if their child is cyberbullied.

Overview

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using technology. Whether on social media sites, through a mobile phone, or gaming sites, the effects can be devastating for the young person involved. There are ways to help prevent your child from being cyberbullied and to help them cope and stop the bullying when it does happen.

Parents need to be aware that children who are victims of cyberbullying may also be involved in cyberbullying others. Cyberbullies do not need to be big or aggressive and their tactics can often be hidden and subtle.

Cyberbullying can also target adults; even though technology has provided wonderful opportunities for both teaching and learning, it has led to some teachers becoming the victims of internet messaging that undermines or ridicules them. It is important that parents make clear this is not acceptable behaviour and lead by example. What once was a conversation at the school gate between small groups of parents can now become a conversation with perhaps hundreds of “friends” on social networking sites – permanent, with a large audience, and easily shared. Whilst parents do have the right to be critical of decisions made by schools, or even individual staff members, there is a fine line between raising concerns in an appropriate way and becoming abusive, or even libellous.

Social networking

Young people routinely access social media and much of their social lives are online. This can create a false sense of security, for example chatting online feels different to chatting face to face. It can be easier to say and reveal things that you wouldn't in the real world, be mean, aggressive or flirtatious. It is important for young people to remember that there are offline consequences to online behaviour.

Social networking can increase existing social pressures and reinforce a sense of isolation, for instance by people purposefully not liking a young person's status update or photo so they seem unpopular, or by excluding them from group chats. Online bullying often involves a large audience and this increases the pressure.

Parents need to understand the way young people communicate with others, and the potential risks. Asking your child simply not to use technology is not a beneficial way to either prevent or react to cyberbullying. This link give parents an overview of cyberbullying [Understanding cyber-bullying in more detail; prevention - bullying and cyberbullying](#)

As a parent you have a challenging job, you need to know what your children are doing online and also help them to do it in a safe way. With technology changing on a day-to-day basis, the best way to stay informed is to get involved. [Let-your child teach you](#)

Set boundaries

A good way to supervise your child's internet access and set boundaries about what they can and can't do online is to create an agreement with them. [Tips on agreeing and setting boundaries](#) if your child breaks the rules, restrict internet access for an agreed period of time.

Ensure you use the privacy settings, parental controls and built in internet safety features provide by the major internet service providers. The UK Safer Internet Centre has guides for [setting internet safety features and parental controls](#).; [contacting the main internet providers](#)

Be involved and talk to your children

It is also very important for you to ensure your child feels comfortable about telling you things that have happened online. Talk to your children and understand the ways in which they are using the internet, social media and their mobile phone. Talk about responsible behaviour as sometimes children who are victims of cyberbullying may also be involved in cyberbullying others. Ensure they know they can come and talk to you if they are being bullied and need support. How you talk to your child will depend on their age. Childnet's Parents and Carers section has more information on talking to your child about staying safe online: <http://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/what-do-i-need-to-know>; [Talking about cyberbullying with your child](#)

Advice for children

The following are some things you may wish to consider teaching your children about using the internet safely:

- Always respect others – be careful what you say online and what pictures you upload. Once a picture is shared online it cannot be taken back.
- Only add people you know and trust to friends/followers lists online. When talking to strangers, keep your personal information safe.
- Treat your password like your toothbrush – keep it to yourself.
- Block the bully – learn how to block or report someone who is behaving badly.
- Don't retaliate or reply to offending e-mails, text messages or online conversations.
- Save the evidence. Always keep a copy of offending e-mails, text messages or a screen grab of online conversations and pass to a parent or teacher.
- Make sure you tell an adult you trust, for example, a parent, teacher, and the anti-bullying co-ordinator or call a helpline like Childline on 08001111 in confidence.
- Most social media services and other sites have a button you can click on to report bullying. Doing this can prevent a bully from bothering you and others in the future. Many services take bullying seriously and will either warn the individual or eliminate his or her account.

Possible signs of cyberbullying

It is not always easy to spot the signs of cyberbullying. Be alert to a change in behaviour for example, being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone. They might be unwilling to talk or be secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use. Be aware that they might not always use the same language as adults and refer to 'drama' rather than 'bullying.'

Your child may suddenly spend much more – or much less – time texting, gaming or using social media. After texting or being online they may seem withdrawn, upset or outraged; they suddenly avoid formerly enjoyable social situations; many new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses show up on your child's phone laptop or tablet; your child notices that they are being gossiped about online or people are suddenly using code words.

What to do if you suspect your child is being cyberbullied

If you suspect your child or teenager is being harassed or bullied either over the internet or via mobile phone, ask them to give you details. If your child tells you that someone is bothering them online, take it seriously. Offer practical as well as emotional support. Print out the evidence for future reference. Talk to a teacher at your child's school if other pupils at the schools are involved. [Top tips if your child is being bullied](#)

Support for children who are bullied

School staff should support all pupils who are bullied and develop strategies to prevent bullying from happening. To help schools support pupils who are severely affected by bullying the Department has produced advice for schools. You may wish to read this and it is available at: [supporting bullied children](#)

The Anti-Bullying Alliance has helpfully put together a fact sheet outlining the range of support that is available to schools, parents and young people from the anti-bullying sector [advice and support from the anti-bullying sector](#) .

Useful Resources

Getting offensive content taken down

If online content is upsetting and inappropriate, and the person or people responsible are known, you need to ensure they understand why the material is unacceptable or offensive and request they remove it.

If the person responsible has not been identified, or refuses to take down the material you should contact the social networking site directly to make a report and request the content is taken down. The material posted may be in breach of the service provider's terms and conditions of use and can therefore be removed.

Some service providers will not accept complaints lodged by a third party. In cases of mobile phone abuse, where the person being bullied is receiving malicious calls and messages, the account holder will need to contact the provider directly.

Before you contact a web service provider, it is important to be clear about where the content is, for example by taking a screen shot of the material that includes the web address. If you are requesting they take down material that is not illegal, be clear to point out how it breaks the site's terms and conditions. Where the material is suspected to be illegal you should contact the police directly.

Contact details for social networking sites:

The UK Safer Internet Centre works with the social networking sites to disseminate their safety and reporting tools. Advice can be found here <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/parents-and-carers/safety-tools-on-online-services>

<p>Facebook Read Facebook's rules Report to Facebook Facebook Safety Centre</p>	<p>YouTube Read YouTube's rules Report to YouTube YouTube Safety Centre</p>
<p>Instagram Read Instagram's rules Report to Instagram Instagram Safety Centre</p>	<p>Twitter Read Twitter's rules Reporting to Twitter</p>
<p>Vine Read Vine's rules Contacting Vine and reporting</p>	<p>Kik Messenger Read Kik's rules Reporting to Kik Kik Help Centre</p>
<p>Ask.fm Read Ask.fm's 'terms of service' Read Ask.fm's safety tips Reporting on Ask.fm: You do not need to be logged into the site (i.e. a user) to report. When you move your mouse over any post on someone else's profile, you will see an option to like the post and also a drop down arrow which allows you to report the post.</p>	<p>Tumblr Read Tumblr's rules Report to Tumblr by email If you email Tumblr take a screen shot as evidence and attach it to your email</p>

Mobile phones

All UK mobile phone providers have malicious or nuisance call, text or picture message centres set up and have procedures in place to deal with such instances. They will help you to change the number of the person being bullied if necessary. If you want to prosecute the individual contact the police. The mobile provider will work closely with the police and can usually trace malicious calls for them.

Service providers

Service provider	From your mobile	Pay as you go	Pay monthly contracts
O2	4445 or 202	08705 678 678	0870 241 0202
Vodafone:	191	03333 040 191	03333 048 069
3	333	08433 733 333	08433 733 333

EE	150	0800 956 6000	0800 956 6000
Orange	150	07973 100 450	07973 100 150
T-Mobile	150	07953 966 150	07953 966 150
Virgin	789	0345 6000 789	0345 6000 789
BT		08000 328 751	08000 328 751

Organisations that provide support to parents and children

[The Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) [internetmatters](#)

[CEOP](#) [Kidscape](#)

[Childline](#)

[Childnet](#) [Get Connected](#)

[NSPCC](#)

[The Diana Award](#) [Thinkuknow](#)

[Family Lives](#) [Young Minds](#)

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

© Crown copyright 2014