

SYSTEMAGIC

CYBER BULLYING

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



Cyberbullying is an increasingly common form of bullying behavior which happens on social networks, games and mobile phones. Being a victim of cyberbullying can be very distressing as messages can be sent anonymously and it is difficult to know who the bully is and it doesn't always end once the victim has left school or college for example, it can continue 24/7 due to the nature and availability of technology.

Cyberbullying is most common among adolescents and teens. A recent study conducted by the i-SAFE foundation discovered that 1 in 3 young people have experienced some kind of cyber threat and well over half of young people surveyed did not tell their parents when bullying occurred.

Types of bullying:

- Harassment – sending abusive, offensive, rude, and insulting messages or comments on posts, photos and in chat rooms. Being offensive on social networking and gaming sites.
- Denigration – sending information about someone that is fake, damaging and untrue. Sharing photos of someone with the aim of ridiculing or spreading fake rumors and gossip. This also includes altering photos and uploading online for the purpose of bullying.
- Flaming – purposefully using offensive language and getting into online arguments and fights, with the explicit aim of getting a reaction and causing an offence.
- Impersonation – pretending to be someone else or hacking into an account to use their identity when posting or sending messages online. . The creation of fake profiles on social network sites, apps and online are common place.
- Outing and Trickery – This is when someone may share personal information about another or trick someone into revealing secrets and forward it to others. They may also do this with private images and videos too.
- Cyber Stalking – repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm, harassment, intimidating messages, or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his or her safety. Depending on the activity this can often be illegal acts.
- Exclusion –intentionally leaving someone out of a group such as group messages, online apps, gaming sites and other online engagement. This is a form of social bullying and is very common.

Possible indicators of Cyberbullying in young people can include:

- Becoming abnormally withdrawn from friends and family members
- Appear angry, depressed or frustrated after using a computer or other device
- Appears nervous or distressed when an message/email or social network notification appears
- Problems sleeping
- Soiling themselves /bed wetting
- Become reluctant to go to school or College / Truancy
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts

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Talk to young people about cyber bullying; discussing the issues and the consequences..

- Do not block access to technology, this may have a detrimental effect when engaging them if an issue occurs.
- Save any evidence. Despite being potentially upsetting encourage them to save evidence of any bullying incident, by taking screenshots or saving emails and messages.
- Under no circumstances reply to messages. Most of the time cyberbullies are looking for a reaction Encourage young people to report an issue to a trusting adult, often young people aren't happy to discuss issues with their parents but will confide in a teacher or another close relative.
- If cyberbullying is occurring from an educational environment as a parent or carer you need to discuss these issues with the appropriate representative. All education establishments have a duty to protect students from all forms of bullying and provide safe learning environments. They have a duty to review and develop online safety as part of their safeguarding responsibilities. Ofsted's Common Framework inspections will include discussions with learners relating to online safety and a review of how these are promoted and how incidents are dealt with are part of their inspections. It is therefore in the interest of the establishment to ensure the appropriate support is given to both pupils and their parents and carers.
- Most social networking sites have some method of reporting abuse etc.

Cyberbullying in Civil and criminal law

- Cyber bullying is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, however harassment, malicious communications, stalking, threatening violence, and incitement are all crimes. There are a range of laws that criminalise acts of cyberbullying and these are:
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Communications Act 2003:
- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Criminal Justice Act 1988

The age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is 10. The age and maturity of suspects should be given significant weight, particularly if they are under the age of 18 as children may not appreciate the potential harm and seriousness of their communications. Prosecution is rarely likely to be in the public interest.

Useful resources and contacts:

- Childnet: <http://www.childnet.com/>
- UK Safer Internet Centre: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>
- NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
- Bullying UK support services: 0808 800 2222