

A guide to cyberbullying

GET WITH IT!



understanding and identifying
cyberbullying to help protect
your children



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1. Introduction

1.1 Who should read this booklet?

This booklet contains information and advice that will be of use to:

- Parents of children of school going age or at college, i.e. up to early 20s,
- Teachers and leaders of youth groups and sports clubs, as well as
- Teenagers and young adults.

1.2 What is the aim of this booklet?

This booklet aims to explain cyberbullying. It tells you how and where it happens, gives guidance on how to prevent it and sets out simple steps to be taken if you become the target of messages that annoy, threaten or insult you.

1.3 Social networking, the good and the not-so-good

All over the world, people are able to share ideas and information on a scale never seen before. This surge in communications has been made possible by information and communications technology (ICT).

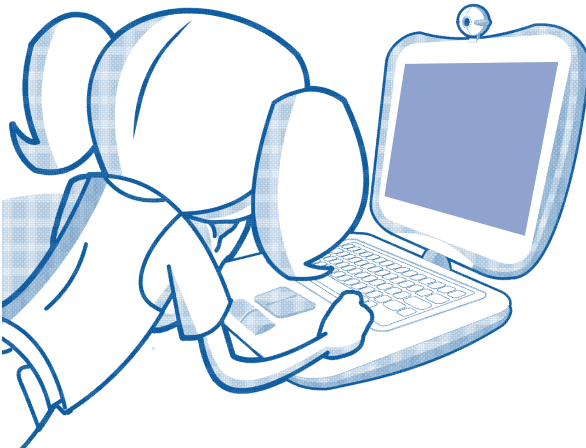
We know that, despite its many benefits, the new and expanding ICT is also being used as a new means to carry on ages – old activities such as bullying

1.4 Communicating – technology has changed the rules!

When we communicate by ICT, we miss out on certain information that comes from a face to face encounter. In a direct encounter we have more opportunity to interpret the exchanges. We hear what is said but we also hear the tone of voice, we see the facial expressions, we notice the general demeanour. We add all this together to interpret the message.

The key message, therefore, is that there are limits to communicating by ICT. In particular, we must be aware that the intended meaning can be lost. Anyone sending a message by ICT must therefore be aware that they risk causing unintended offence by making careless remarks.

We should also be aware that messages sent via electronic devices remain and can be reused, whether in the right context or not. Comments can be archived online - not only are they visible but may be searchable, even when they are believed to have been removed.



2. What is Cyberbullying?

2.1 Some general points

- Cyberbullying occurs when bullying behavior is carried out through the use of ICT systems such as e-mail, mobile phones, instant messaging (IM), social networking websites, apps and other online technologies.
- The most important feature of bullying is the intention to annoy, etc.
- However, as discussed in the previous section, we can also cause annoyance unintentionally.
- Therefore, **think before you send a message!**
- Remember that the same message may be interpreted differently depending on whether it was received as, for example, a text or as an oral message, by post or as a tweet.



2.2 Some more specific points

- Bullying is conduct that is aggressive, threatening or intimidating and that is, generally, repeated.
- It may be conducted by verbal, psychological or physical means by an individual or group against one or more persons.
- Bullying is always wrong and is unacceptable behaviour. It should never be overlooked or ignored.
- Cyberbullying refers to bullying which is carried out using the internet, mobile phone or other technological devices.
- Cyberbullying generally takes a psychological rather than physical form but is often part of a wider pattern of 'traditional' bullying.
- It can take the form of sending nasty, mean or threatening messages, emails, photos or video clips; silent phone calls;



putting up nasty posts or pictures; saying hurtful things; pretending to be someone else or accessing someone's accounts to make trouble for them.

2.3 Must the bullying be prolonged or continuous?

Bullying is more likely to be behaviour that is sustained or repeated over time and which has a serious negative effect on the well-being of the victim and it is generally a deliberate series of actions. **Once-off posting** of nasty comments on someone's profile or uploading photographs intended to embarrass someone is not very nice but it **may not**, by itself, be bullying.

However, a one-off electronic message is very different to a hand-written message. The big difference between writing nasty messages on the back of a school book and posting it on the internet is that the online messages can potentially be seen by a very wide



PLAY VIDEO

audience almost instantly. And, as already noted, the message can remain available on the internet even if it is later removed from the site where it was first posted. In other words, the online message, even if intended to be one-off, can become, in effect, permanent.

2.4 Additional comments on online behaviour, etc

How we use ICT

- Many people tend not to feel as responsible for their online actions as they do in 'real life', for example, a more informal style is often used when posting messages on the internet, but 'informal' must not become 'careless'.
- When they are online, users can hide behind the anonymity that the internet can provide.
- There is also a tendency, especially between young people, to hide their messages from adults, even when there is nothing abusive, insulting, etc.

The online bully and the victim

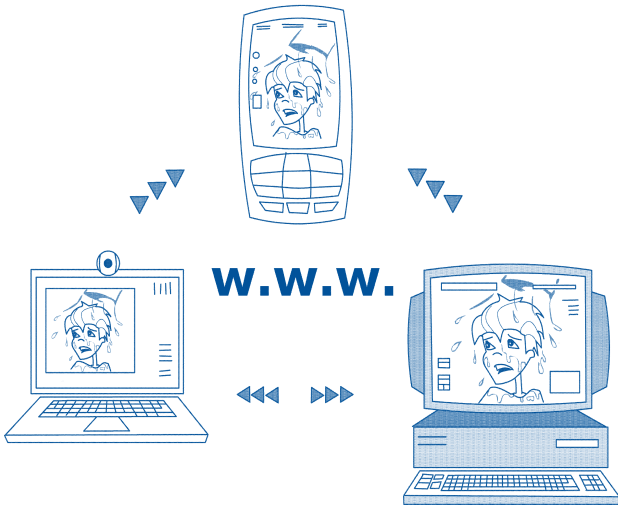
- In most cases, cyberbullies know their targets, but their victims don't always know the person bullying them. This can prove very isolating for the victim in group, club or school settings where they come to distrust all their peers.
- Cyberbullying can happen any time and any place and, parents should be aware that for many children, home is no longer a safe haven from bullying.

How young victims might react to cyberbullying

- Young people are often fearful of telling others about being bullied because they fear that the bullying may actually become worse if they tell.
- They are often also afraid to report incidents, as they fear that adults will take away their mobile phone or other device and/or their internet access.
- As a result they can feel isolated, they do not know who to trust, their judgment, self-image and confidence can all be damaged.

2.5 Different forms of Cyberbullying

- **PERSONAL INTIMIDATION** – This behaviour includes sending threatening text (SMS) messages, posting abusive and threatening comments on the victim's profile or other websites, or sending threatening messages via instant messaging (IM).
- **IMPERSONATION** – This behaviour involves setting up fake profiles and web pages that are attributed to the victim. It can also involve gaining access to someone's profile or instant messaging account and using it to contact others and subsequently bully them while impersonating the account or profile owner.
- **EXCLUSION** – This behaviour involves blocking an individual from a popular group or community online.



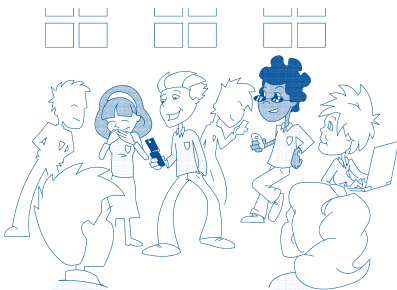
- **PERSONAL HUMILIATION** – This behaviour involves posting images or videos intended to embarrass or humiliate someone, it can involve users sharing and posting images or videos of victims being abused or humiliated offline, or users sharing personal communications such as emails or text messages with a wider audience than was intended by the sender.
- **FALSE REPORTING** – This behaviour involves making false reports to the service provider or reporting other users for a range of behaviours with a view to having the user's account or website deleted.

3. Preventing Cyberbullying

3.1 Home and School together

The Minister for Education and Skills has published anti-bullying procedures to be adopted and implemented by all 4,000 primary and post primary schools. The New Procedures and the associated Department Circular 0045/13 are published on that Department's website.

Cyberbullying goes beyond the school environment. The efforts to defeat it cannot therefore be confined to the schools, they must also go on in the wider community, especially in the home.



The messages and the responses coming from home and school must be consistent. By working together, home and school can create awareness of the issues and provide clear channels for reporting bullying. They can help to reduce the risks by providing an open culture where bullying can be freely reported and discussed. It is important to create a positive, supportive atmosphere around the topic.

All schools and youth groups should have an Anti-Bullying Policy. Everyone in the school or group should be involved in the development of the policy; the policy should be rigorously implemented and reviewed regularly.

An Anti-Bullying Policy can be effective in sending a clear message about bullying by setting down:

- How seriously the school or club treats cyberbullying
- What the organisation is doing to prevent bullying behaviour
- What students can do
- What parents can do
- What teachers and other school staff can do
- Who to contact in the event of a problem
- How incidents are handled.

Anti-bullying policies should also be incorporated in an acceptable use policy (AUP). Further information on developing an AUP for general technology use within schools is available on:

<http://www.webwise.ie/Teachers/Publications for Schools.list>

ISPCC's "Shield My School" Toolkit

The ISPCC has developed its new "Shield My School" Self-Evaluation Toolkit for schools. The toolkit takes the form of a self-assessment tool designed to assist schools to understand and reflect on how effective they currently are in tackling bullying.

The ISPCC self-evaluation Toolkit is downloadable free of charge from the ISPCC website **<http://www.ispcc.ie/antibullyingtoolkit>**

Educational Resources

While the home plays a substantial role in preventing bullying, schools too have a crucial role.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Technology in Education working with SPHE curriculum bodies has developed resources that enable students to explore their attitudes and their safety when using the internet and mobile phones.

<http://www.webwise.ie/Teachers/Learning Resources.list>

The National Youth Health Programme (HSE, NYCI, Department of Children and Youth Affairs) and the Child Protection Unit in the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) have produced an anti-bullying resource and accompanying training for the out-of-school setting: **Let's Beat Bullying**

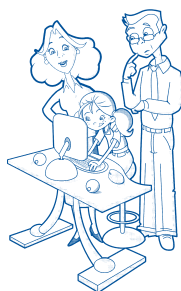
It is available to download from:

<http://www.youthhealth.ie/publications>

3.2 Steps you can take at home to prevent cyberbullying

Get Involved in your Child's Online Life

Let your child know that you are there to listen and to help them should they be a victim of cyberbullying in any way. The single biggest thing you as a parent can do to keep your child safe online is to engage with what they do. Parents should therefore use their parenting skills to help their children to stay safe in their online lives.



Get to know your child's internet and phone use

All parents should understand how children use these technologies. Encourage openness. Don't be afraid to ask your children about their activity online. Ask him or her to show you which websites they like visiting and what they do there; do this only if you feel its necessary and helpful to the child. Acquiring knowledge of how children use these technologies can make it easier to make the right decisions **with** your child on their internet and mobile phone use.



Register as a contact on your child's phone

Mobile operators in Ireland provide a 'Dual Access' service. This service allows both parent and child to have access to the account records held by the mobile phone company including; account balances, numbers called and the services available on the mobile phone. Access to certain services such as the internet can be barred or restricted on your child's handset. Contact your mobile phone provider to request further information.

Encourage Respect for others

As in everyday life, there are informal ethical rules for how to behave when relating to other people on the internet. Talk to your child about the harm that can be caused by cyberbullying and ensure that they understand what the consequences might be for everyone involved, including the bully.

3.3 How "bystanders" can help

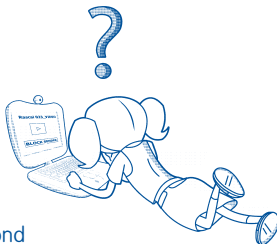
Bystanders who become aware of the cyberbullying of others but who are not directly involved can assist the victim. In this context "bystanders" can include team mates, work colleagues, auxiliary staff in schools (Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), wardens, school bus driver, etc). They can:-

- help individuals to report cases to appropriate adults, e.g. teachers, but they must not encourage the victim in any way to, in turn, bully the bully
- share knowledge about, for example, how to take screenshots and configure privacy settings
- encourage people to 'leave', 'unfollow' and 'unlike' bullying
- make a difference.

The bystander must never exceed their role, they must never become part of the problem.

4. Key Advice for Children and Young People:

You can take control by not putting up with offensive content and by reporting it when you come across it.



Here are some ways you can respond to unwanted messages.

Don't Reply to messages that harass or annoy you. Even though you may really want to, this is exactly what the sender wants. They want to know that they've got you worried and upset. They are trying to mess with your head, don't give them that satisfaction.

If you respond with an even nastier message it makes them think that they really got to you, and that's just what they want. They might even complain about you!

Keep the Message. You don't have to read it, but keep it. Keep a record that outlines, where possible, the details, dates and times of any form of bullying that you experience. This would be useful in the event that an investigation is carried out by your school, youth organisation, or even the Gardaí. Collect and keep the evidence.



Tell Someone you trust. Talking to your parents, friends, a teacher, youth leader or someone you trust is usually the first step. If you need to speak to someone in confidence straight away you can call Childline on 1800 66 66 66, or get help through their online services at www.childline.ie.



Block the Sender. Don't put up with it – block it! It may be possible to restrict unwanted communications (check the device manual or seek adult help). Mobile networks can't bar numbers but they will help you to change your phone number in the case of serious bullying.

Report Problems to the people who can do something about it. Responsible websites and mobile phone operators provide ways for their users to report things such as pornography, bullying content, or other offensive material.

Step 1: Report to the website, social network or mobile phone operator

If something that is hurtful or offensive to someone is posted on a website, social network or circulated by mobile phone, your first step should be to contact the owners of the service. For information on how to do this see Section 7 of this publication. If this doesn't have any effect, move on to step 2.

Step 2: Report Serious Issues

Serious incidents that could be illegal should be reported to the Gardaí. Illegal issues include inappropriate sexual suggestions, racist remarks, or persistent bullying that is seriously damaging to the victim's well-being.

If you are being bullied by mobile phone, contact your mobile phone operator, they can help by changing your phone number.

5. Key Advice for Parents

As a parent, you are well placed to identify and deal with any cyberbullying your child might encounter. Children or young people who have been bullied will have difficulty in overcoming this problem alone and will need your help in tackling it.

What should I look out for?

If your child is:

- avoiding school, or
- seems upset, sad or angry (especially after using a phone or other electronic device)
- withdrawing from usual activities
- suddenly showing disinterest in electronic devices or
- rapidly switching screens when you enter the room.

that child **may** be a victim of cyberbullying.

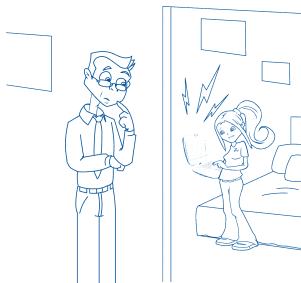
Confirm that you are dealing with bullying behaviour

There are four questions that, when taken together, you can use to help confirm if what you are dealing with is bullying:

- Target – Is your child specifically targeted on their own or is the behaviour targeted at a group of people?
- Duration – Has this been happening over a period of time?
- Frequency – Is this behaviour part of a recurring pattern?
- Intention – Is this behaviour deliberately intended to harm or upset your child?

Report cyberbullying

You should get in touch with your child's school or youth organisation if the bullying involves another pupil from that school or youth group. You should also contact the service provider through its Customer Care or Report Abuse facility. If



the cyberbullying is very serious and potentially criminal you should contact your local Gardaí.

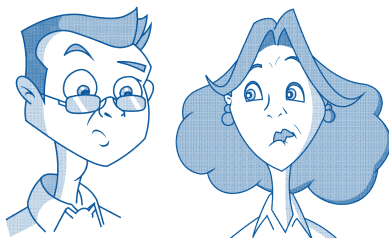
Respond appropriately

If you are concerned that your child has received a bullying, offensive or harassing message, it is very important that you encourage them to talk to you. It will be easier for you to do this if you have already established a good understanding with your child about ICT usage.

Responding to a negative experience by stopping, or threatening to stop, their access to mobile phones or the internet might not be the appropriate response and it might result in you, the parent, being left out of the loop the next time this happens. Section 7 of this booklet provides information on what you can do to help, for example, contacting the service provider; you should refer to that section

Webwise Seminars for Parents – The PDST Technology in Education and the National Parents Council Primary have developed an Internet Safety seminar for parents. For more information about how to get a speaker to your school visit www.npc.ie

New NPC Anti-Bullying Leaflet now available – National Parents Council Primary and National Parents Council Post Primary have published a leaflet on bullying in line with the Department of Education and Skills Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools. For more information visit www.npc.ie



6. What can I do if I suspect my child is a cyberbully?

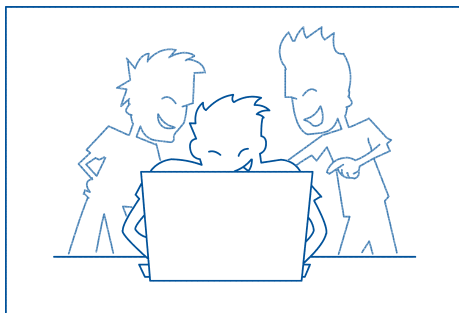
We have been highlighting the plight of the victim as well as how to prevent cyberbullying and how to respond to it. But who is the bully? You will want to be sure it's not your child.

Every child and young person needs to understand

- How much all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, hurts and
- How important it is not to stand by when someone is being bullied.

It is important, therefore, that children learn "netiquette" (informal code of conduct on the internet). You should explain the following guidelines to them and stress how important it is that they be followed when sending an email or other form of electronic communication;

- Respect other people's online rights
- Avoid hurting someone's feelings
- Do not insult someone;
- If someone insults you, be calm;
- Avoid "crashing" discussion groups or forums;
- Respect the privacy of other people online;
- Be responsible online.



7. When and How to Contact the Service Provider

7.1 Video and Photo Sharing sites

If a photo or video that you feel violates your privacy is posted on a website, you should contact the uploader directly using the site's message function. Sometimes the uploader may not be aware that you feel uncomfortable with the posting of the content.

If you can't contact the uploader or they refuse to remove the content in question, you should notify the website owners of your concerns. If the content is illegal or goes against their terms and conditions, they will remove it from the site within a reasonable amount of time.

Report content on YouTube:

<https://youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/reporting.html>

Report content on Flickr:

http://www.flickr.com/report_abuse.gne

Report content on Instagram:

<http://help.instagram.com/448523408565555>

Report content on Vine:

<https://vine.co/contact>

Report content on vimeo:

<http://vimeo.com/help/violations>

Report content on snapchat:

<http://www.snapchat.com/>

Report content on pinterest:

<https://en.help.pinterest.com/home>

7.2 Social Networking sites

The first thing you should do if you are having issues with content on a social networking site (SNS) is report the matter to the website owners. You can use the website reporting tools to do this. However, if you are encountering difficulty in reporting this behaviour, your internet service provider may be able to assist you in providing information on how and where you can report such abuse.

Remember however that bullying or harassment occurring on an SNS is a matter for that SNS abuse team. In the first instance it should be reported to them using their online complaint facility (usually a "report abuse" button that appears on the profile display or as a link at the bottom of the page).

In all cases when reporting abuse, you should be aware that the owners will need some of the following details to enable them to identify the content concerned: Username or member ID #, Email address, Name of the School or the exact location of the content (name of the photo, club, poll, forum or quiz).

Some examples of services on networking sites are

MySpace

MySpace.ie-cyberbullyreport@support.myspace.com

Facebook

www.facebook.com/help

Twitter

<http://support.twitter.com/articles/15789>

Tumblr

<http://www.tumblr.com/help>

Please see www.webwise.ie for advice on Tumblr

<http://www.webwise.ie/article.aspx?id=15953>

Ask.fm

<http://ask.fm/about/safety>

You may also email: support@ask.fm

Please see www.webwise.ie for information on Ask.fm

<http://www.webwise.ie/AskfmGuide.shtm>

LinkedIn

<http://help.linkedin.com/app/safety/home>

If you are experiencing difficulties with other Social Networking Sites not listed above, you should contact the site administrators directly for advice and assistance.

7.3 Internet Chat

Skype

<http://support.skype.com>

Yahoo Messenger

<http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/abuse/>

Google+ Hangouts

<https://support.google.com/plus/topic/3008153?hl=en-GB&ref=topic=1257349>

If you are experiencing difficulties with other operators not listed above, you should contact your operator directly for advice and assistance.

7.4 Mobile Phones

O2 Customer Care – contact numbers

1909 (Bill paying customers)

1747 (Prepay customers)

1850 601 747 (Prepay customers from a landline)

<http://www.o2online.ie/o2/help/contact-us/>

Vodafone Customer Care

1907 (Bill paying customers)

1747 (Pay as you go customers)

1850 20 40 20 (Pay as you go customers from a landline)

<http://www.vodafone.ie/helpsupport/contactus/>

3 Customer Service

From your 3 mobile 1913

From other phones 083 333 3 333

<https://www.three.ie/support/index.html>

Meteor Customer Care

1905 (Bill Pay customers)

1747 (Pay As You Go customers)

1890 808 585 (Pay As You Go customers from any other phone)

http://www.meteor.ie/contact_us/

Emobile Customer Care

1800 690 000

+353 1 4307312 (Customer care while abroad)

<http://www.emobile.ie/contact/>

Lyca Customer Services

1923 from Lycamobile or 01 437 2322 from another phone

01 437 2322 from another phone or 01 437 2322 from abroad

<http://www.lycamobile.ie/en/contact-us>

8. Useful Websites

Please note that these links are provided to assist you. The Office for Internet Safety does not accept responsibility for websites listed or the information contained within them.

You can get further information on general internet safety issues, including cyberbullying, from the following websites:

www.internetsafety.ie

Website of the Office for Internet Safety

www.webwise.ie

Provides parents and teachers with educational resources, advice and information about potential dangers online

www.watchyourspace.ie

A website devoted to providing a portal for young people to show their support for victims of cyberbullying

www.childline.ie

Child Safety Issues

www.hotline.ie

Irish hotline for public to report child pornography and other illegal content.

www.barnardos.ie

Charity for the protection of children

www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie

The Professional Development Service for Teachers, Technology in Education provides advice and support on technology in education.

www.actagainstbullying.com

Act Against Bullying

www.stopcyberbullying.org

www.o2.ie/childprotection

Information on child protection services offered by O2

www.cyberbullying.org

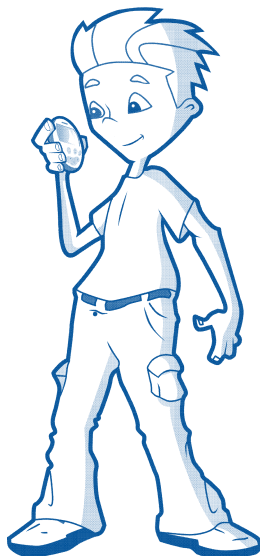
Provides information on cyberbullying

www.npc.ie

Website of the National Parents Council Primary

www.nyci.ie

Website of National Youth Council of Ireland



'Get With IT!' Series

The 'Get With IT!' series of booklets is available on the publications section of the Office for Internet Safety website www.internetsafety.ie.

There are four booklets in the series:

A parents' guide to new media technologies,
A parents' guide to filtering technologies,
A parents' guide to social-networking websites, and
A guide to cyberbullying

Hard copies of the booklets are available on request from the Office for Internet Safety at:

Freefone: 1800 24 25 95

Email: getwithit@justice.ie

**GET
WITH
IT!**

CYBERBULLYING:

What it is?

How to prevent it?

How to cope if it happens?

Where to turn for help?

**For more
information
Contact:**

Office for Internet Safety
Department of Justice
and Equality
51 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Freefone 1800 24 25 95
E: getwithit@justice.ie
W: www.internetsafety.ie