

5. What young people have told us

What did young people tell us about effective approaches in preventing and responding to cyberbullying?

This guidance has been developed in consultation with young people. Childnet International talked to five groups of secondary-aged young people between the ages of 12-17, about cyberbullying, what effective strategies schools are implementing and what can be improved to help support young people more effectively.

What are young people's definitions and experiences of cyberbullying?

The young people were able to define cyberbullying in the following ways:

- posting comments, messages, photos or screenshots that are mean, threatening, untrue, personal, secret or embarrassing. Young people also mentioned cyberbullying could be targeted on the grounds of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and race.
- anonymous messages or abuse (on social networks or online gaming).
- filming you or taking photos of you without your consent.
- 'indirect' messages when you don't directly name someone but everyone knows who you are talking about.
- fake accounts or profiles.
- excluding people from online conversations or talk behind your back.
- Young people highlighted a range of reasons why people might cyberbully others, including: boredom, acting tough, jealousy, hiding behind a screen, grudges or disagreements, wanting attention, peer pressure or those who had been bullied themselves might want others to experience what they have been through.

Young people also identified a number of experiences in relation to cyberbullying:

- cyberbullying often happens alongside offline bullying.
- a range of popular services were named where cyberbullying takes place, including social networks and online gaming platforms.

- cyberbullying doesn't always have to be extreme, but it can be the regularity or the number of people involved that makes it particularly upsetting.
- while many young people were aware of cyberbullying incidents in their school, they also recognised that they might not always know about it.
- there can be a tendency to typecast people as either a "bully" or a "victim" but it is often not as clear cut as this.

What awareness do young people have on school rules around cyberbullying?

- Some young people were very aware of rules around cyberbullying and what the consequences would be, while others knew you would get in trouble for cyberbullying but said they hadn't been explicitly told about it. Some young people didn't think there were any rules at all.
- Most young people found out about the rules around cyberbullying because they saw what happened with an incident in school; for example, a pupil being excluded. However, young people also commented on issues that went unpunished or were not reported to school in the first place.
- Some young people felt that schools often did not have rules about bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender or gender identity. Young people felt they were told that cyberbullying was wrong, but not told about different types of prejudice-based bullying.

Where would young people turn if they were being cyberbullied?

- Friends or siblings.
- Parents or other family members.
- A few young people would turn to a teacher or counsellor, and often named a particular teacher who had responsibility for offering pastoral support to pupils.
- Some young people wouldn't tell anyone if they had been cyberbullied.

What reasons did young people give for why they might not tell someone they were being cyberbullied?

- Fear of the bully or worried the bullying might escalate
- Embarrassment
- Not wanting others to see them as a 'snitch'
- Telling someone would be perceived as a sign of weakness
- Feeling that people would not care
- Being threatened or blackmailed into not speaking out
- Belief that they were somehow responsible for being bullied
- Did not think adults would believe them, or understand what cyberbullying was
- Would only tell if the bullying got really bad
- Worry that parents might confiscate devices or stop them from going online

What reasons did young people give for why they might not tell a school staff member they are being cyberbullied?

- Uncertainty about who to turn to in school or teachers being too busy
- Fear of everyone at school finding out if they told a teacher
- Feeling the schools don't have a detailed enough understanding of social networks and other online services
- For LGB&T people, perception that school staff lack familiarity with issues relating to gender identity and sexual orientation
- Teachers might not feel they have a role to play as it's something that happens in a young person's private life.
- Feeling that schools don't take an interest in cyberbullying or take it seriously
- If they were being cyberbullied by someone from another school or being cyberbullied anonymously – feeling that the school would not be able to help

What would make it easier for young people to turn to someone at school?

- Having an approachable member of staff that pupils feel comfortable around and knowing what times they would be available
- More confidential and private routes for reporting concerns
- Assurance that if they reported concerns it would not result in everyone in the school finding out
- Being able to speak to someone their own age like peer mentors

- Inclusion of cyberbullying when the school talks about bullying
- Cyberbullying should not be addressed as an isolated issue, but be integrated across behavioural, pastoral and citizenship activities

What young people would do to help someone who was being cyberbullied

- Positive approaches include:
 - being aware of risks and managing these ahead of time (i.e. only friending trusted people on identifiable accounts, protecting personal information and using privacy settings).
 - telling a trusted adult.
 - supporting the person who is being cyberbullied (i.e. making sure that they didn't feel alone, trying to cheer them up, helping them to report, giving practical advice – e.g. showing them how to use blocking and privacy settings).
- Approaches to be cautious of include:
 - relying solely on support from friends or siblings.
 - standing up for the person being bullied – with the risk of getting drawn into the incident.
 - reacting to the incident by removing themselves from the situation or changing their behaviour (i.e. closing accounts, changing user names or using a different app).
- Risky approaches include:
 - getting angry and cyberbullying the person back, or physically attacking the person doing the cyberbullying.
 - doing nothing and advising others to ignore it.