

# Respect

This section has been developed to help generate discussions about respect, friendship and online conflict including cyberbullying. Talking to and interacting with others is a key aspect of many of our lives online. This section of the toolkit aims to empower young people to be positive and respectful communicators who are resilient to conflict and know how to respond appropriately when they encounter disagreements. This section also looks at online friendship and encourages young people to treat others with respect and kindness, just as they would do offline. Finally, this section will directly tackle the issue of cyberbullying and provide young people with a range of strategies to respond with if they are the victim of such behaviour.

## Challenges for young people with additional needs

Using the internet to communicate can offer exciting opportunities for young people, especially if they find face-to-face interactions more challenging. Being able to have a voice and to participate, in a way that they might be excluded from doing so offline, can be a hugely empowering experience for young people with additional needs. We also know the internet can be a great source of support and can provide access to communities of likeminded individuals.

However, not all interactions online will be positive. For young people with SEND, witnessing or being the target of unkind and hateful actions can be particularly hurtful. Furthermore, young people with additional needs may need more support to understand how their own actions online can affect other people. Whilst there is no single way to behave online, it is important to discuss the meaning of respect and why it is necessary. Young people with additional needs can be best supported in this area by exploring appropriate boundaries, discussing access to support and reporting tools and establishing positive rules and expectations.

## Online friendships

Note – for specific advice on discussing online friendships and sharing with people who they **do not know in-person**, see S for Sharing and T for Trust.

Having friends and peers who support them can be a hugely positive and important part of a young person's life. However, the challenges of managing and maintaining happy friendships are often complicated even further when those interactions are played out online. It is easy for misunderstandings, miscommunications and even jokes to get out of hand, leading to arguments and conflict.

It is important to encourage young people to think about the consequences of their words and actions and how they might make other people feel. Promoting kindness and respect, alongside actively modelling ways to show support to others online, is a great starting point.

This could include:

- ★ using kind and respectful language,
- ★ showing support through likes or positive comments,
- ★ asking for permission before sharing about someone else,
- ★ sharing advice or useful content, or
- ★ being an upstander.

To be an upstander, someone who stands up for others online, isn't always easy. Often, young people are worried about becoming a target themselves, making things worse or simply not knowing how to help. It is important that young people talk through these issues and are encouraged and empowered to know how to stand up or reach out when people are in need.



## Managing conflict online

Much like in the offline world, young people can find themselves in conflicts online that are hard to manage. This can include arguments with or between friends that either start or are continued online. It is particularly easy for misunderstandings to occur online because of the absence of social cues (such as facial expressions, body language or tone of voice) that can help determine the intended meaning behind what someone has said.

Whilst it is important that young people know and feel comfortable to come to an adult when online conflict worries or upsets them, it is also helpful to support them in managing such situations more independently. Strategies to share with young people to help resolve or defuse a difficult situation could include:

- ★ taking some deep breaths or counting and only responding when you are feeling calm,
- ★ apologising if you have made a mistake or someone is offended by something you have said/done,
- ★ taking the conversation offline and having a face-to-face discussion,
- ★ finding a compromise that works for both parties,
- ★ agreeing to disagree, or
- ★ changing the subject and moving the conversation on.

When handled properly, conflict can be a normal and even healthy part of online friendship. However, online conflict often does not afford young people the time and space they might need to respond in a calm and respectful way. If a young person cannot respond calmly and respectfully, they should be taught to stop and step away to speak to an adult they trust.



## Responding to online bullying (cyberbullying)

Cyberbullying is any form of bullying that takes place online deliberately and more than once. Cyberbullying differs from offline bullying in several ways. Most significantly, because it takes place online, the bullying can continue even when the young person is at home and in this sense might feel more inescapable. Cyberbullying may involve unkind comments, pictures or memes being shared or targeted at one person. It might also come in the form of excluding someone from online groups.

It is important that young people are taught what to do if they or a friend are the victim of cyberbullying as well as not to ignore or participate in online behaviour that may constitute cyberbullying.

### Key advice to share with young people to respond to cyberbullying:

Nobody should have to experience online bullying	If you see or experience online bullying, tell an adult straight away	Save any evidence by taking a photo or screenshot	Use online reporting and blocking tools
Do not retaliate	Do not wait for it to stop or go away, take positive action instead	Never join in with any behaviour that could be bullying	If you feel like you have nobody else to talk to, contact Childline on 0800 11 11



## Getting help and reporting

There are different routes for help, support and reporting available online and offline. To find out more about how to support young people and helplines for professionals, please visit [www.childnet.com/teachers-help](http://www.childnet.com/teachers-help).

It is important that young people are aware of the support available to them at home, in school and online. Details for online support and helplines for young people can be found at [www.childnet.com/young-people-help](http://www.childnet.com/young-people-help).

Details for online support and helplines for parents and carers can be found at [www.childnet.com/parents-help](http://www.childnet.com/parents-help).