

Online Bullying (formerly referred to as 'Cyberbullying') is the foremost concern reported by children and young people. It can take many forms and is often an extension of other bullying activity.

Online bullying is often done through Social Media platforms, SMS (text messaging) and other online environments such as online gaming platforms.

The online environment can appear to be a distraction but it is important to remember that whether online or offline, bullying behaviour is still bullying..

In contrast to 'traditional' face-to-face bullying, victims continue to receive abuse and torment when away from the perpetrators (e.g. after school, whilst at home).



It can feel constant and never-ending and can be particularly difficult as it continues into the home environment which would normally be considered a safe space from bullies.

Adults may feel less confident to deal with online bullying as technology is involved. However, bullying, whether it is through Social Media, Online Games, Messaging Apps or a combination of these platforms is still bullying.

Young people may feel it is simply something that they expect or there is little that can be done about it.

Equally, perpetrators often explain it as 'just banter', not recognising the upset their actions cause, particularly as it occurs at a distance' or 'behind a screen' rather than face-to-face.

Simply asking young people to 'unfriend' or avoid the platforms used can serve to further compound the issue, increasing feelings of loneliness or isolation whilst also further separating them from their friends. In addition, as young people are often heavily invested in their technology, if they fear that they may lose access to it, they may be less likely to raise the issues when they occur.

Make Use of the Technology: Whilst online bullying can be particularly destructive, by occurring online, it does present additional opportunities for action. Instances of online bullying leave an online 'footprint' and can be retained and saved through screenshots as evidence for taking further action.

Encouraging young people to be 'upstanders' rather than 'bystanders' can be a challenge but does not need to be a direct confrontation – using the reporting tools and facilities available on social media platforms can be effective, and there are typically far more options than initially thought



Support: Encouraging children and young people to raise the issue (either about themselves or a friend they are concerned about) may be a huge step for them so it is vital they feel supported. Understand that asking for help requires a huge amount of courage. For the young person, raising the issue may just be the most recent step as the bullying may have been happening for a considerable amount of time.



Do not be distracted by the technology – it is often useful to ask the question ‘how would I respond if technology wasn’t involved?’

Questions:

Would I know how to respond to a disclosure about online bullying?

Do I know where I can find further advice about dealing with incidents?

Does my organisation have a robust and effective process for addressing instances of bullying?



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