CYBER BULLYING AND OTHER INTERNET DANGERS

A guide for parents/carers on cyber safety

Disconnecting mobile phones and the internet isn't the answer - **connecting with our children and young people is!**

Time to STOP bullying

Sunderland Partnership

sscb Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board

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Introduction

All adults need to take an active interest in the way technology is being used by children and young people at home, at school, and in our communities.

It can be difficult to talk to children and young people about the responsible use of the internet and mobile phones, particularly because their understanding of technology is often greater than that of adults!

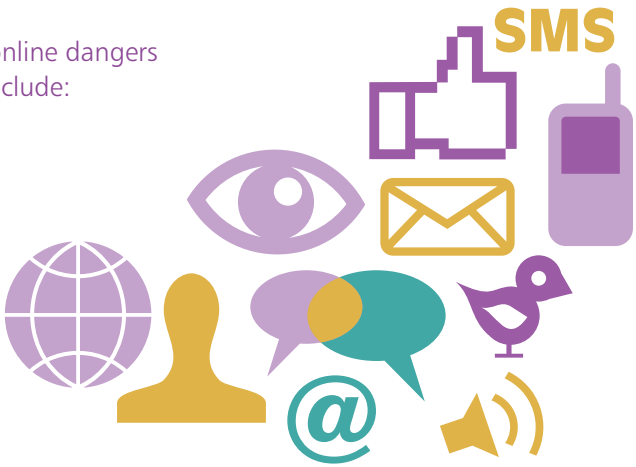
Mobile technology and the advances that it brings isn't a bad thing; far from it. In the majority of cases, children and young people do use this technology responsibly.

This booklet will guide you through:

- An introduction of commonly used terms and technology
- How you can discuss safe and responsible use of technologies with children and young people
- What you can do if a child or young person is being bullied online or is bullying others
- The different types of online dangers

The different types of online dangers covered in this guide include:

- Cyber bullying
- Sexting
- Grooming



How does mobile technology work?

Children and young people are now using more sophisticated methods of communicating with each other.

They are increasingly turning to mobile phones and the internet to keep in touch; share aspects of their life; and make new friends. Mobile phone ownership by children and young people is increasing with children now having access to mobile technologies at a much younger age.

Mobile phones and Smart phones

Most people are familiar with the use of mobile phones and the ability to send and receive text messages, but the additional features of a smart or android phone allow picture messaging, video recording, internet access and applications (apps) that provide access to social networking and gaming platforms as an additional way of communicating.

There are now more internet connected devices (smart phones, tablets etc.) than there are people in the world and access to the internet using a mobile phone has more than doubled in recent years.

Smart phones can also connect to other smart phones through the use of Bluetooth technology to share information, music or photos, Bluetooth also provides a way of connecting and exchanging information between laptops, PCs, printers, digital cameras, and video game consoles. This makes it much easier for large groups of people to view information in a very short space of time. However it also means that anyone nearby with Bluetooth technology can connect to your phone or laptop - to stop this happening all children, young people and adults should ensure that settings on their devices are set safely.

What is an 'App?'

App is short for application. Thanks to 'apps' there are many things that you can now do on a smart phone that you would have only been able to do on a computer before such as check the weather, play games or connect to Facebook. Some 'Apps' can be downloaded onto mobile phones. Some will have a cost but others are free.

Social networking sites

Social networking websites are increasingly being used by children and young people (and indeed by many adults) as a key way of communicating and building relationships, or making new friends online.

Websites such as Bebo, MySpace and Facebook are online 'communities' of people who share interests and activities, and communicate through the use of

messages, videos, discussion groups and blogs (blogs are similar to online diaries). It's a place where people can create a personal network that connects them to other users.

There are now over 30 million Facebook users in the UK.

Individuals can add their own page to sites such as Facebook and they can create their own personal profile which might include information about what they like to do in their spare time, their favourite bands, football team or TV programme. It might also include photos of themselves and friends, or even some video footage of something they've seen that they want to share.

To build a network, individuals can invite people with similar interests to become a 'friend' of their page. Similarly, they can be invited to become part of someone else's network of friends, so the scope for communicating through social networking sites is vast.

All children, young people and adults should ensure that the settings on these sites are set safely otherwise strangers can view their personal profile or join in online conversations.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging can take place in chat rooms or on sites such as 'Skype' and Facebook chat.

It is very similar to email, except that conversations happen in 'real' time and you don't get the time delay you can get with email. People can chat to one another in the same way that they would if they were face-to-face or on the telephone.

Instant messaging and chat rooms are very different to social networking sites in that anyone including strangers can access a conversation in a chat room, whereas on Facebook, MySpace, etc. it's easier to control who sees your page and who can leave comments.

When users enter a chat room or instant messaging site, the message they send is instantly displayed on the screens of the person they are talking with or the other users in the chat room. This gives people a degree of anonymity, which children, young people and parents need to be aware of, as some people might not be who they appear to be.

What is cyber bullying?

‘Cyber bullying’ means bullying behaviour that takes place via mobile phone or over the internet through emails, instant messaging and social networking websites.

Texts, messages or images are sent or posted online, which hurt, intimidate or embarrass another person.

Cyber bullying is not carried out face to face and people often don’t know the identity of the person targeting them, but cyber bullying is no different from any other forms of bullying; the behaviour is the same and the impact is no less devastating.

Advances in technology are simply providing an alternative means of reaching people – malicious messages were once written on school books or toilet walls, they can now be sent via mobile phone or the internet.

For children and young people, the internet is a place not a ‘thing’. It’s something that allows them to connect with friends and other children and young people at any time of the day or night. This means that cyber bullying can happen virtually anywhere, and is no longer confined to the classroom or playground.

The use of the internet as a tool to bully others allows information to be sent to a large audience instantly. It also provides a sense of anonymity and an ability to send material to others under a false name. Therefore children and young people can be targeted in their own homes; in their bedrooms and personal spaces where they should normally feel safe and protected.

Where can cyber bullying happen?

Cyber bullying can take place anywhere that children and young people have the use of technology. Some common places include:

- **Facebook**
- **YouTube**
- **Instant message applications such as Skype or Facebook chat**
- **Mobile phones**
- **Online gaming**

What can we do about cyber bullying?

Adults can help stop cyber bullying. Start by talking to children and young people about the issue and teaching them the rules that will help prevent cyber bullying from happening to them or someone they know.

One of the best sources of advice for parents and for children and young people is CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) – contact details are at the end of this booklet.

What to do if your child tells you they are being cyber bullied

DON'T PANIC!
Children and young people often say that they are reluctant to tell an adult that they are being cyber bullied because they believe that the adult will over-react. For children and young people, they often think this would mean having access to their mobile phone or their computer taken away.

Below are the steps you can take:

- **Assure them that they have done the right thing by telling you -** It can be difficult for children and young people to recognise that they are being cyber bullied. For many, nasty comments via text, in a chat room or on their MySpace or Bebo page is often accepted as "coming with the territory".

- **Offer reassurance and support -** Your child may be in need of emotional support or feel like they have nowhere to turn. It is rare that cyber bullying is only taking place online and it is often someone your child knows through school or a group they attend. Their school should have policies and procedures for dealing with cyber bullying.
- **Your child could visit www.cybermentors.org.uk** This is an online counselling service with a difference; the counsellors are also children and young people. This site has proved very popular and offers practical advice
- **Listen and learn -** It is important to understand what you are both dealing with. There are some questions that you can ask to find out more about what has been going on:
  - *What has been said?*
  - *Who has been saying it?*
  - *How long has it been going on?*
  - *Has the cyber bullying been accompanied by other bullying such as 'face to face'?*
  - *What have they tried to do about it already?*
  - *How has it been making them feel/how has it been affecting them?*
  - *Have they been storing/keeping any of the bullying messages?*
  - *What else has happened since it started (has anyone 'hacked' into their page or posed as them online?)*

Decide a plan of action with your child or young person

It is vital that they feel involved and experience an element of control about the steps that will be taken to address the bullying. The steps that you may have to consider taking are:

- **Go through any messages that they have received and kept -** Tell your child that if they are being bullied to always keep the evidence. Whether it's a text message or email, tell them it is important not to reply to the bully nor delete the comments. Ask your child if they know the bully or where the messages are coming from. Often it is someone from school and so it can be dealt with quickly and effectively with assistance from the school

- **Ask them not to open any further online or text messages from these addresses and phone numbers, but to allow you to open them instead -** You might feel that you want to reply to these messages but it is very important that you do NOT do this
- **Block the bullies -** If someone is bullying your child on a social networking or chat site encourage them to block or delete the individual so that they can't be contacted by them anymore
- **Change their mobile phone number -** Contact your mobile phone network provider and explain what has happened and request a change of number. It is important that your child knows not to give their mobile number away to people that they do not trust
- **Change their online profile -** Log-in names on MSN can be changed easily and your child/young person should be reminded, as above, only to accept trusted real life friends as online friends. Profiles on social networking sites (Bebo, MySpace, etc.) can also be changed. Again, your child/young person should only accept people they trust as friends. Personal and identifying details should be kept to a minimum. Pages can be made private so they are only shared with friends, and are not public and available for everyone to see. Designs or cartoon characters known as avatars can be used instead of photographs and nicknames can be used instead of real names.
- **Report any bullying content to the website it's hosted on -** Information on how to do this can be found on www.getsafeonline.org

If content has been posted, for example a video or image, which is upsetting your child, you should report it to the website (for example, Facebook). You should learn how to report content on sites like Facebook and YouTube as every site is different.

Contacting the website provider is the only way to get the offensive content removed, unless it is illegal. In cases of illegal content, such as indecent images or videos of young people under 18, then you must contact your local police or report it to CEOP

What is “sexting”?

‘Sexting’ is a word created by the Australian press which describes the use of technology to share personal sexual content.

It’s a word-mix of “sex” and “texting”. Other nicknames you may hear might be “cyber sexing”, “doxing” or “selfie”. (Note: a ‘selfie’ is taking a photo of yourself on a mobile phone, tablet or webcam and isn’t necessarily always of a sexual nature).

Sexting is when someone sends or receives sexually explicit material on their mobile phone, computer or tablet. This content can be anything from sexually explicit texts and partial nudity to sexual images or video. Very often it is between partners, but can be between groups, and can use a whole range of devices, technologies and online spaces. However, the most common ones are mobile phone MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service), Skype and social network sites where images can be posted and shared (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, YouTube etc).

A Childline poll found more than half of teenagers have sent explicit images of themselves via their mobile phones, many of them sending the images to strangers or on social networking sites.

There are many reasons why young people get involved in sexting. These can include doing it to fit in with friends; peer pressure; being harassed, threatened or blackmailed; being in a long distance or loving and trusting relationship; or because they feel confident about their body.

A person sharing naked pictures as part of a safe relationship is not a new thing. What has changed though is the speed with which you can share. Using webcams or sending mobile pictures can be a spontaneous decision, made without thinking about what could happen and what people might think. Once the picture is sent it can easily and quickly be shared with many people.

That's why it is important to talk to your child and encourage them to think carefully before sending such images. The 'World Wide Web' means the potential of a huge audience and a risk that it could spread to hundreds or thousands of people, and of course, if a photo is uploaded and shared, it can be on there forever. Encourage your child to ask themselves these questions

- **If we break up, will this person respect me enough not to share my pictures?**
- **How well do I really know them?**
- **Do I need to send them a picture of my body?**

There is also a great film about the risks of sexting called 'Exposed', which is on the CEOP website. We recommend that you watch it with your child to start the conversation.

What to do if a sexually explicit photo/video is shared with others

Some of the problem will be around the people your child thought they could trust, sharing the image or joining in the negative comments. This might be the person who was sent the image in the first place, or friends or others who then circulate it. People get caught up in gossip or 'bitching' sessions, often without meaning any harm to the victim, either to impress other people, to 'belong', or because it starts as a joke which escalates. Other times people do it to bully someone.

When sexting goes badly, it can make the young person feel ashamed, guilty, embarrassed or anxious about what people might say – this is a natural reaction.

The good news is that there are things you can do to make the situation better and prevent it from happening again. The sooner they talk to somebody about the situation the better; this could be their parents/carers, the Police, a trusted adult or school teacher. Your child's school will have ways of dealing with these sorts of problems and the sooner they tell somebody, the better the chances that you can stop the image from

What is online grooming?

You've probably heard of the term 'grooming' before. In essence, this is a process used by people with a sexual interest in children to attempt to engage them in sexual acts either over the internet or in person.

The similarities between the online grooming process and the initial process of building online relationships can mean that some victimisation is going unnoticed as many victims don't realise they're being 'groomed'

Sadly, these people do attempt to make contact with children over the internet; this may be in social networking sites, chat rooms or online games. They could do this by pretending to be someone else, or showing an interest in them.

It is important that children understand that people like this exist and that they should never do anything online or offline that they are uncomfortable with. Talk to your child about online grooming. Explain how easy it can be to lie online and the reasons why an adult may wish to contact them.

Tell them to speak to you if anything like this happens to them. Tips on how to approach this subject can be found on the CEOP website as well as how to report any inappropriate contact made to your child online. This can be done via www.ceop.police.uk or contact your local Police station by calling 101 (or dialing 999 in an emergency).

What is webcam abuse?

Webcam abuse is sexual abuse, where typically an offender tricks a young person into sending them indecent pictures.

They can be tricked by the offender in a number of ways, such as pretending to be a boy or girl of their own age or pretending to be someone they know. The offender then threatens that they will share the photos/videos with the young person's friends or family if they don't do what they say. Parents should talk to their children about this type of crime and reassure them of their support should they find themselves in this kind of difficulty.

What to do if you think your child is being groomed or sexually exploited online

Tips on how to approach this subject can be found on the CEOP website as well as how to report any inappropriate contact made to your child online.

CEOP is part of the National Crime Agency, and is dedicated to tackling the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people. CEOP is there to help young people (up to age 18) who have been forced or tricked into taking part in sexual activity with anyone online or in the real world. For information, advice and to report concerns directly go to CEOP's Safety Centre whose web address is www.ceop.police.uk . You can also contact your local police (dial 101). However, if a child is in immediate danger you must call the police on 999.

Remember despite these types of crimes, the internet is an essential part of young people's lives and provides them with tremendous opportunities and the vast majority of children and young people use it without coming to any harm.

Other online dangers

Happy slapping - is a term used to describe the filming of violent incidents on mobile phones. This is assault and should be treated as such. It should not be seen as 'just' a bullying incident. The footage is evidence that an assault has taken place and must be reported to the police for investigation.

Internet troll - is a person who starts arguments and upsets people on the internet by posting inflammatory messages in an online community such as a forum or chat room and deliberately seeks to provoke a response or disrupt normal discussion.

Where do I begin?

- **Be involved in your child's online life -** For many of today's young people there is no line between the 'online' and 'offline' worlds. Young people use the internet to socialise and grow, and just as you guide and support them offline, you should be there for them online too. Talk to them about what they're doing, because if they know you understand they are more likely to approach you if they need support.
- **Watch the 'Thinkuknow' films with your child to learn more -** The Thinkuknow site has films and advice for children from age five to 16 years. Your child may have seen these at school, but they can also be a good tool for you to find out more about what young people do online and some of the potential risks. They can be found on the CEOP site www.thinkuknow.co.uk.
- **Keep up-to-date with your child's development online -** Ask about and show an interest in the new gadgets and sites that your child is using. The ways of sharing information are constantly growing for example sharing images/videos on Snapchat or through a six second video vine, may lull children into a false sense of security. The appearance of these videos/images are time limited and then they are removed from the site and the device they were sent to, however if someone is viewing them on a pc and then takes a photo on their mobile phone, they can easily share the images.

It's important that as your child learns more, so do you

- **Set boundaries in the online world just as you would in the real world -** Think about what they might see, what they share, who they talk to and how long they spend online. It is important to continue to discuss boundaries so that they evolve as your child's use of technology does.

- **Know what connects to the internet and how -** Nowadays, even the TV connects to the internet. Your child will use all sorts of devices and gadgets, so make sure you're aware of which ones can connect to the internet (such as their phone or games console), and make sure they have the right safety setting on them. Also, find out how they are accessing the internet – is it your home connection or a neighbour's Wifi? This will affect whether your safety settings are being applied.

How do I start that conversation about cyber safety?

The people who know best about what your child is up to online is your child!

Find out about the sites they're using. Ask them questions such as:

- **Why do they like the site?**
- **What can they do on it?**
- **What's so fun about it?**
- **Who uses it at school?**
- **Who can they talk to?**
- **Who are their friends on it?**

This is a good way to develop a trusting relationship with your child about what they are up to online and gives them more confidence to come to you if there is a problem.

Cyber safe agreement

To support the safety of children and young people whilst using the internet, Sunderland City Council produced a cyber-safe agreement which can be used by children, parents, schools and other settings to help them stay safe whilst learning and having fun.

You can access this agreement at any school or at www.yourhealthsunderland.com

The agreement is an excellent tool to begin a conversation with your child about internet safety and sets a standard which will help to keep your child safe whilst online.

What are parental controls and how do I set them?

Parental controls are not just about locking and blocking, they are a tool to help you set appropriate boundaries as your child grows and develops.

They are not the answer to your child's online safety, but they are a good start and are not as difficult to install as you might think.

The first thing to do is to find your Internet Service Provider (ISP) and learn how to set your controls. ISPs are the organisations that pipe the internet to your home (like Virgin Media, Talk Talk, Sky and BT). All of the major ISPs provide parental control packages. These can allow you to apply controls across all of the devices that access the internet through your home connection – such as laptops or games consoles.

Every parental control package is different, but most provide services such as:

- **Filtering content -** restrict access to particular sites, such as pornographic websites
- **Time limits -** restrict the amount of time your child can be online, or set periods of time where your child can access certain sites
- **Monitoring -** where you are informed of certain sites that your child is attempting to gain access to
- **Reporting -** where you are provided with information about what sites your child has used.

If you are unsure how to apply these settings contact your ISP, or ask for advice in a computer shop.

Internet dangers and the law

There is not a specific law which makes cyber bullying illegal but it can be considered a criminal offence under several different acts including:-

- Protection from Harassment Act (1997)
- Malicious Communications Act (1988)
- Communications Act (2003)
- Obscene Publications Act (1959)
- Computer Misuse Act (1990)

Will my child get into trouble?

Young people under the age of 18 are seen in UK law as a child. Therefore it is an offence under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and the Criminal Justice Act 1988, if you have any indecent images or videos of somebody who is under 18 years as you are technically in possession of child pornography – even if you are the same age. Anyone who passes on indecent images of someone under 18 even if it is to a boyfriend / girlfriend with permission of the person depicted is also breaking the law, as sending or receiving sexually explicit photographs of children (anyone under 18) is an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003

However, parents need to know that the law was not designed to punish young people for making mistakes whilst experimenting with their sexuality.

The law is aimed firmly at those who choose to trade or profit from sexual pictures of children and sexually exploit them.

Therefore even though the image(s) sent may constitute an indecent image of a child (sometimes called child porn), the Association of Chief Police Officers have clearly stated that **young people will be treated as victims** in the first instance and only extreme cases may be reviewed or looked at differently.

Who can help me?

CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection)

CEOP was set up by the Government in 2006 to help protect children online across the UK from online predators. The **www.ceop.police.uk** website provides information and advice for online safety.
As well as helping UK police forces to bring these people to justice, CEOP can advise you and your child. You can **report** at **www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-report/** or by going to the CEOP website

Northumbria Police

Local police can also offer support and counselling. Visit Northumbria Police's Ebeat site **www.northumbria.police.uk/ebeat/** which has advice and guidance for parents and teachers as well as children and young people.

Local advice

For **local advice** on bullying visit **www.yourhealthsunderland.com**

Further advice and information

There are also many national organisations that can help such as:

Childline -
information on online and mobile safety
www.childline.org.uk

Cybermentors -
practical advice on cyber bullying and counselling services
www.cybermentors.org.uk

ThinkUknow -
CEOP website with films for young people on cyber safety
www.thinkuknow.co.uk

NSPCC -
provides advice to parents/carers on sexting
www.nspcc.org.uk

Safe Network information on online safety -
includes many links to further pages
www.safenetwork.org.uk

Childnet International -
works in partnership with other organisations to help make the internet a safe place for children and young people
www.childnet.org.uk

Kidscape -
has a range of information for both children and adults, with some interactive sections for young people on responding to bullying
www.kidscape.org.uk

Stoptextbully -
has a lot of information on text bullying specific to children and young people
www.stoptextbully.com

Chat danger -
offers advice on the potential dangers of online interactive services like chat, IM, online games, email and on mobiles phones
www.Chatdanger.com

Notes:

This information can be made available in large print, Braille, other languages and audio. Please contact communications@sunderland.gov.uk tel: 0191 520 5555 for help.

When you have finished with this booklet, please recycle it.
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