



respectme
Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service

Bullying...
A guide for
parents and
carers

Welcome

This publication is about responding to and understanding bullying, both face to face and online. It has been designed to give you practical skills and to increase your confidence to support your child. There is also information on internet safety that you may find useful as a parent or carer.

Bullying can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people. Bullying can impact upon a child or young person's aspirations, confidence, relationships and quality of life. Problems such as disengaging from school or clubs, difficulties with friends, to self-harming and eating disorders can happen as a result of bullying.

But the wider impacts of bullying, and the associated stress it can create, can also affect family members and the wider community.

What do we mean by bullying?

Bullying is a combination of what someone did and the impact that had; bullying impacts on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves.

This feeling is what we term as their sense of 'agency'. It is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online.

It can include behaviours such as:

- o Name calling and teasing in person and online
- o Being hit
- o Having belongings taken or damaged
- o Being ignored or left out
- o Receiving abusive texts or messages on social media
- o Having rumours spread about you in person and online
- o Being targeted for who you are or who you are perceived to be

This behaviour can harm physically or emotionally and, while the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time,

Strained relationships can be caused by disagreements or even feelings of blame or guilt when a child is being bullied. Some parents and carers who have experienced bullying themselves are often anxious that the same thing will happen to their child. Families can feel helpless and overwhelmed by this and should be able to ask for help. This publication uses the same definitions and describes the same approaches to anti-bullying that *respectme* uses when working with Local Authorities, Schools and children's services.

In Scotland, the Local Authority that runs your child's school or the organisation that runs the sports club or uniformed groups can get advice and support from *respectme* to develop policies and rules, as well as training on how they respond to bullying. What you read here should then reflect the training and policy that the people who work with your children receive.

typically by actions such as looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these. A bullying incident only has to happen once to have a lasting impact on a person.

We know that bullying takes something away from people; that is one of the things that makes it different from other behaviours. It takes away people's ability to feel in control and take effective action. We need to keep the focus on giving children and young people this control back when we look to address bullying behaviour.

Sometimes a person can feel bullied, but they may be over reacting to a situation. In this instance, we still need to deal with how it has made them feel. Similarly, if a person tries to bully someone but does not succeed, we still need to deal with how they behaved.

A child or young person is still more likely to be bullied face to face than online. Online bullying can be very public and visible, but the bullying most children experience is private and not done in full view of everyone else.

Prejudice-based bullying

Bullying behaviour may be a result of prejudice that relates to perceived or actual differences. This can lead to behaviour and language that includes racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, or prejudice and discrimination towards disability.

Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice. Prejudice-based bullying can be based on any characteristic unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance and some of these characteristics are protected by law.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic', these are:

- o age
- o disability
- o gender reassignment
- o pregnancy and maternity
- o marriage and civil partnership
- o race

Other behaviours

However, it is important to distinguish between bullying and other types of behaviours. Children and young people will tease and fall out with each other from time to time, they won't always get on but every fall out isn't bullying.

If your child is beaten up or attacked, this is assault not bullying. If someone films this and posts it online it provides evidence that an assault has taken place.

If your child is threatened or coerced into taking inappropriate pictures, or doing something they do not want to do, this is not bullying. It may

- o sex
- o religion or belief
- o sexual orientation

Prejudice-based bullying includes the protected characteristics and other prejudices which are not listed in the Equality Act. For example, prejudice arising from socio-economic background, if a child or young person is Looked After, or for their general appearance. There is a need to address the root cause of prejudice as well as responding effectively to incidents as they arise.

We know places where prejudice is challenged, and where there is a culture of respecting difference, are places where bullying is less likely to thrive.

As parents and carers we must be clear that regardless of your personal views, targeting a person for these reasons is not acceptable. Schools, youth clubs and sports or drama clubs will also be expected to challenge this behaviour.

be sexual harassment or even sexually abusive behaviour. If your child is targeted by an adult and groomed either in person or online, this is child abuse, not bullying.

Hate crime is defined through the law as a crime motivated by malice or ill-will towards individuals because of their actual or perceived disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity. A hate crime can take a number of forms that are potentially a form of criminal harassment and should be treated as such. Adults and children and young people can seek appropriate advice and guidance from Police Scotland if they feel a hate crime may have taken place.

Dealing with bullying behaviour

Very often, children and young people are reluctant to tell adults that they're being bullied. This might be because they are scared of an over-reaction, they don't want to burden parents/carers if there are other things going on in the family, they're

embarrassed, or they are worried that telling might make the situation worse.

But there are a number of things you can look out for if you're concerned your child is being bullied:

Potential signs

- They become withdrawn
- They have scratches and bruises that can't really be explained
- They don't want to go to school or they are having trouble with school work
- They don't want to go out or play with friends
- Their online behaviour changes
- There are changes to how and when they're using their mobile
- They change the route they take to school
- They complain of headaches, stomach aches and other pains
- They become easily upset, tearful, ill-tempered or display other out-of-character behaviour

Of course this list is by no means exhaustive, and displaying some of the above symptoms won't necessarily mean that your child is being bullied. But as a parent or carer, you will know better than anyone if there's an unexplained change in your child's behaviour that needs to be explored further.

So what should you do?

We know that bullying takes something away from people; that is one of the things that makes it different from other behaviours. It takes away a person's ability to feel in control and take effective action; what we call our agency. Bullying strips away a person's capacity for agency, and it's important to remember that when you respond to bullying behaviour, your focus has to be on helping them to get it back; helping them to get back that feeling of being in control and being themselves again.

That's why we have to involve young people – to find out what they want to happen, what they would like to happen, and what they are worried about happening. And sometimes we need to take a lead from them as to what pace we go at. If we can do that, we can help restore that feeling of being in control. This is something children and young people tell us they value when they have been bullied. They can often feel powerless and being consulted and involved in what to do next can help address this.

Listening

Children and young people appreciate adults who take the time to listen. When it comes to bullying behaviour, our capacity to listen can help us to understand young people, how they are being affected and what we can do to help.

they're saying but also how they're saying it, and pay attention to their body language and facial expressions – you can often learn a lot from these alone.

Good listening is 'active listening', which means much more than simply 'hearing' the words. To really understand children and young people we need to pay attention to all of the key elements of their communication. Listen carefully to what

All behaviour communicates how we feel. If your child hasn't told you that they're being bullied but their words, tone, body language or facial expression give cause for concern, then take time to talk to them and explore the reasons behind this.

'Active' listening is also about **responding** appropriately to what your child is communicating. For example, they might be reluctant to verbally tell you that they are being bullied but might display subtle cues, such as becoming withdrawn.

Things to remember

Don't panic!

Remaining calm supports good listening and is reassuring for your child

Give your full attention

This is reassuring and shows you are taking them seriously

Explain the reasons for your concern

Feeding back what you have noticed sensitively can help your child to see more clearly how bullying is impacting on them

Exploring options

Hearing that your child is being bullied creates an understandably emotional response. It's difficult for parents and carers to hear, and when you find out your child is being bullied, you are not always at your best.

Sometimes the advice we give children and young people at this time isn't necessarily the best. Children and young people tell us that being told to 'hit back' if they are being bullied is a common response. We know it exists as an option for some people but we also know, by and large, it's not necessarily the best or safest option. Children and young people do not always value this advice either.

It doesn't take into account people that can't or won't hit back; people who are physically unable to or are too scared, or people who don't like the thought of violence. So there always has to be an alternative. The vast majority of people don't go through life answering challenges and relationship

Noticing this change and taking time to ask your child how they are can help. Your response will make it easier for them to tell you about the bullying and gain your support.

What do they want you to do?

Exploring this will make your child feel valued and will help you to understand what support they need

Keep listening!

If they are reluctant to talk straight away, remind them that you are always available to listen and they can talk to you at any time

Do not judge

If a child or young person has shared information about their gender identity or their sexual orientation they may have chosen to tell you because they trust you and value your relationship. Respect this.

difficulties by resorting to violence, yet we tend to tell children if they are being bullied that they should hit back – whether they are being physically bullied or bullied online.

There is never one, single, answer when it comes to bullying, it's about talking through options and making choices.

Sometimes you have to ask your child, 'What do you want to happen?' 'Tell me what you have done so far' 'What would you like me to do?' 'What do you think would happen if, say, I was to talk to the school about it?' Listen to what they say.

If they are worried that you would make it worse, you might have to try something else because most children want bullying to stop with the minimum of fuss. You could try, 'What do you think would happen if I spoke to someone's mum?' or 'Is there someone else you can talk to?'

It's about exploring options; thinking about what you can do and sometimes having to say, as a parent, 'look if I'm worried and I don't think you're safe, I'm going to step in', and explain why you are doing it.

When you explore options, you want your child to suggest some realistic things that they can try – and you need to support them in what they feel comfortable doing. As parents and carers, we must ensure that we keep our channels of communication open to our children for when they need it.

They might not want to worry you or see you over react. They need to know they can talk to someone; it might be an older brother, a cousin, an aunt or a teacher or they may call Childline. As long as they are talking about it – this can reduce worry and stress levels.

Some advice encourages children and young people to write down what is happening, but this mainly works with people who like to write stuff down or vlog already. Some children are great at being funny and using a clever comeback, but you need to be careful that this doesn't make things worse. If you're not funny and can't think fast on your feet, this probably isn't a good option.

Online bullying

Bullying that takes place online is still bullying. We can't think of 'bullying' in one respect and 'online bullying' in another – it is still about relationships that are not healthy. It is still behaviour done by someone to someone else, it is the **'where'** this is taking place that is new. Our 2014 research showed that face to face bullying is still more prevalent than online bullying. We also found that children and young people were experiencing the same behaviour online as they were face to face. Name calling, hurtful comments and rumours were the three most common behaviours on line and face to face.

The behaviour simply appears to be migrating. As children and young people spend more time online, the behaviour they have always exhibited and experienced goes with them to where they are spending their time.

Remember, what works for one person won't always work for another, and what worked before might not work today – it is all about choices. What can help a child or young person to cope with what is happening? What will make the behaviour stop? We need to be alert to both.

The temptation to run off and solve the situation is an understandable one, but we should always take a moment, pause and think, 'how do I give my child back a sense of being in control?', because it's that sense of being in control that has been taken from them, and that has to focus how you respond.

It is worth remembering that a child may feel bullied when they have not been; they may not have been invited to a party because the numbers were limited, or they misjudged the way a person looked at them. We still need to respond to how they feel, but there may be no need to label the other person or feel that something needs to be done about them.

Also a child can attempt to bully someone, but fail. They may shout homophobic slurs, for example, at someone who is not in the least bit bothered. This person has not been bullied but the behaviour they are experiencing is unacceptable and should be addressed.

They have access to smart phones, laptops and tablets, and this technology allows them to communicate in different ways. They still experience name calling, being left out and having rumours spread about them – but it takes place online, on social media sites, via phones and tablets and through gaming platforms.

To children and young people, the internet is another place they go to, to meet with friends and socialise. But they're still going somewhere. In order to help keep them safe you have to take an active interest in what they're doing online – where they're going and who they're interacting with, in the same way that you would if they were going into town, to the sports centre, youth club, or any other physical place.

And that means having an understanding of their online environment and how to make it safe. You can't abdicate responsibility to software or service providers, you need to make sure you're switched on to the ways in which young people are communicating so that if they tell you they're being bullied, you know how to react.

Children and young people do not differentiate a great deal between friendships online and in person – most of their interactions online are with friends and people they interact with in other areas, such as at school and where they live.

Dealing with online bullying

Your reaction to online bullying shouldn't differ greatly from your reaction to a disclosure of any other type of bullying. It's important to focus on the behaviour and the impact it's had, and not get hung up on 'how' or 'where' the bullying has taken place. Remember if your child is being bullied online, it's possible that they're also experiencing bullying offline, at times by

the same people for the same reasons; it's not always exclusive.

However, when bullying has taken place online, there are some additional, practical steps you can take to resolve the situation. This is where the time you spend connecting with the places they go to online, and the devices they use, comes in very useful.

Go through any messages, posts or pictures that they have received and kept. If you feel that any of these messages or pictures can be construed as illegal then keep copies, dates, times or phone numbers and take them to the police.

Ask them to share any further messages with you – assure them that you won't over react and you are not trying to invade their privacy but help resolve what is happening. You might want to reply to these messages yourself, but be very careful not to respond in a manner which could be seen as threatening or harassing.

'Block' people. You can effectively deny access to people formerly regarded as 'friends' from seeing, reading, commenting, contacting them, or posting messages to their page. Blocking sounds like a very simple and straightforward response but the reality for many children and young people is that blocking can be seen as socially unacceptable. You need to be mindful of this and explore how they feel about it, and perhaps explore other options instead.

Involve other agencies. When online bullying is being carried out by someone that the child or young person knows and sees on a regular basis, it might be worth involving other agencies. If both parties are at school or a youth group, it will be helpful to make them aware of the problems, if they're not already, and involve them in the plan of what to do.

Talk about how you behave online and in person. It is important to set boundaries and let your child know how you expect them to behave online. Talk about how they react to things and how they talk to and about other people, just as you would if they were going to school, starting a new club or going out with their friends. Their online life is just an extension of their existing social life, usually with most of the same people.

Sharing your concerns about bullying

Approaching a school or other organisation about a bullying incident may seem like a daunting prospect – but remember it's in their best interests to help

you resolve the situation and reach a satisfactory outcome. Make an appointment to speak to the Head or Senior Teacher, senior youth worker or

other adult that your child feels comfortable with. Calmly tell them what has been going on – it would be helpful if you have details of when the incidents have taken place – then discuss what you would like to happen next and how you can proceed together. It is helpful to be prepared for these discussions, so be ready to discuss;

- » The behaviour that concerns you
- » The impact it had
- » What you are going to do from your end
- » Ask ‘what are they going to do?’

The school or organisation should not suggest that the bullying is your child’s fault, or that they should change their behaviour. Neither should they suggest that your child should move to another class, or even to another school, as a solution to the bullying. Nor should they say that because it happened online, it is not their responsibility. Bullying happens ‘to’ a person first and foremost.

People who are bullied take the impact with them, wherever they are. If they inform someone at school, at the youth group or anywhere else that something’s happened and that they’re worried or scared, the adults must respond in a supportive way. Children and young people tend to open up to the people they believe can/will help them.

Don’t expect the situation to be fully resolved at the first meeting, that won’t always be possible. Neither should you expect the person(s) involved to be automatically excluded. Exclusion alone will rarely change bullying behaviour. Schools and other

organisations often employ a variety of methods to prevent and tackle bullying; some will have an immediate effect, others may take longer.

They will also need time to investigate the incidents, so agree a plan of action and set a date to meet again to review the situation. Keep in touch with them and be a ‘pushy parent’ if you need to be, but try to keep the relationship on a positive basis – this will be more beneficial to all parties in the long run.

You should also ask for a copy of their anti-bullying policy. In Scotland a school should have one and so will your local authority – you should see both. An individual service or youth group should have a policy, as should the organisation they belong to. There is also a national policy called ‘Respect for All’ that sets out what people should be doing in relation to anti-bullying work across Scotland.

Policies set out how people will deal with bullying if it occurs. If you have time, it would be useful to get a copy of the policy before your initial meeting so that you can familiarise yourself with it. If the bullying is happening in the community and you need to talk to a neighbour or another parent, do so tactfully and carefully. Again, it’s important to keep the channels of communication open – and remember your child will probably want the situation resolved with the minimum of fuss.

For further information on what to look for in an anti-bullying policy as well as national policy, visit the [respectme](http://respectme.org.uk) website: www.respectme.org.uk

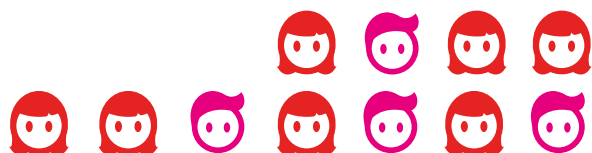
What if my child is bullying someone else?

Children and young people can become involved in bullying behaviour for a number of reasons – there is no such thing as ‘typical’ bullying behaviour. All behaviour communicates feelings, so it’s important that you explore the reasons behind their behaviour, which might include:

- o They don’t recognise their behaviour as ‘bullying’
- o They are unaware of the impact their behaviour is having on other people
- o They are prejudice towards certain groups of people or individuals
- o They feel challenged and are trying to regain control over a person or situation

- o They do not feel they will be identified or found out as they are posting online
- o They are being encouraged to join in as part of a group and they’re going along with it to save face
- o They have experienced bullying themselves and want to avoid being a target
- o They are in a culture where bullying behaviour is acceptable
- o They have ‘learned’ bullying behaviour or prejudice from a role model or peer

The advice for parents whose child is involved in bullying is not that different from the advice given to parents whose child is being bullied. It’s natural to be angry and upset, but it’s important that you



remain calm, take the time to discuss the issue and LISTEN to your child's explanation.

When you've established the reasons behind the bullying, you have to address their behaviour and the impact that it has had. Children who are bullying others need help to repair relationships; they need help to understand that what they've done is wrong. Sometimes they know the impact of what their behaviour is; that's why they're doing it, but sometimes they need help to understand the effect their behaviour is having on someone else.

Ask them to consider the impact that their actions are having on the other person or people involved. How would they feel if they were being bullied; what if they were the one who was left feeling anxious, isolated and filled with fear when they left the house? If they dreaded logging on to their computer or looking at their phone because they were scared of what messages there might be?

Be prepared to deal with prejudiced attitudes. The behaviour behind the bullying might stem from racism, homophobia or ignorance about a different culture or religion. Addressing this can be difficult, challenging and emotive, but prejudiced attitudes must be explored and dealt with.

Agree what you're going to do to stop the bullying behaviour. All behaviour carries consequences and your child has to realise that they are accountable for their actions.

Role modelling

The way we, as adults, choose to communicate has a considerable impact on children and young people. Despite what we may think, it's family members that children and young people view as role models, not famous celebrities! This is a huge responsibility and there are a few things to consider when we think about what this means.

Do you show your children how to deal with problems effectively? If you are calm, reasonable and respectful of others, they

At school, this might mean finding a way forward that gives them the chance to make amends or repair relationships with the other person – but be crystal clear that their behaviour is unacceptable and clearly state how you expect them to behave. This can also result in restricted access to phones or the Wi-Fi at home.

You might also want to alert the parents of the other person involved to make sure they're aware of what's been happening, and to ensure that their child gets any support that they need. It might be helpful to get support for both families from a third party, such as a teacher. It's also important to get support for your own child. Revisit the reasons for their behaviour and identify the best way of doing this.

It's important when we deal with children who are bullying that we don't label them. We talk about their behaviour and we talk about the impact that it has, we don't label them as 'bullies'. There isn't any single, stereotypical 'bully'. Bullying is behaviour that makes people feel a certain way – and many of us will have acted in a certain way that made someone feel hurt, frightened or left out. It's much easier to change behaviour if you say, 'when you did that to him; that was bullying'. You're much more likely to get a better response than if you say, 'because you did that, you are a bully'. You don't change behaviour by labelling people. You change behaviour by telling people what they did, why it was wrong, and what you expect instead.

can learn to act in the same way. But similarly if you fly off the handle or overreact to situations, they can learn that it's okay to act that way.

Does the language you use reinforce that being different is okay? **Racist, sectarian, homophobic and other language that promotes negativity towards others can encourage prejudice-based bullying behaviour.** We need to show respect for other people and their cultures and beliefs to

encourage children and young people – as well as other adults – to value and appreciate difference. Are you respectful of other people online? Be aware of your own behaviour when it comes to socialising on Facebook or Twitter, or when posting comments on forums, for example, in relation to news articles.

We need to ask ourselves as adults, what message do we give out about gender equality. Bullying in the form of derogatory language, online comments and the spreading of malicious

rumours affects both girls' and boys' behaviour – suggesting that they are not being a real man or a real woman if they do not behave in a certain way towards others. This can lead to boys demanding girls act a certain way, and can make them act in way that is not fair or respectful.

Children are very good at knowing who they can and can't talk to. Our challenge as adults is to be someone that children and young people can look up to for all the right reasons; someone they can respect, not fear.

Helping your child to cope

There are valuable things you can teach your child, regardless of whether bullying is taking place. We know that children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they form and build relationships. This is a normal part of growing up and they have the natural ability to bounce back from this type of behaviour.

Very often children and young people can be more resilient than we give them credit for, but they have to learn from the adults in their lives. Role modelling, consistency and seeing how adults cope and respond to little things, lets children and young people know that you will listen and value them and help them to develop the skills to recover

from bullying behaviour. But if bullying is ignored it can strip away at this resilience, making it harder for them to talk about it, look for help and cope with the impacts.

Children and young people need secure relationships around them. They need love, praise and recognition. They need to learn how to socialise and have friendships and interests in and out of school. These are the things that give them the ability and the support needed to cope with difficulties; the things that promote mental wellbeing and provide them with skills they will use and value all of their lives.

Conclusion

There is no easy answer when it comes to bullying behaviour. Every situation is different; the reasons behind the behaviour will differ, and each incident will require an individual approach, regardless of whether it's happening online, face to face or both.

Children can be embarrassed or scared of what will happen if they tell an adult that they're being bullied. They need to be confident that you will take them seriously and LISTEN to them. They want to know that you will help to make the bullying stop without over-reacting and by considering their feelings and what they'd like to happen next. And this might mean agreeing not to do anything except

monitor the situation for a while, which can be difficult, but children and young people tell us that often it helps just to have told someone.

If they do want you to act, make sure you agree a way forward **with** your child, give them a say in how they would like the situation to be dealt with – and remember they'll probably want a minimum of fuss.

You need to help your child regain a sense of control over their life again. Show them that you can listen and let them know they can ask you for help when they need it. Working at your relationship together can make all the difference.

Online safety

Over the years we have shared the message that a child going online 'is still going somewhere'. It is a social activity and, like other social situations, there are risks, including bullying. This next section is

designed to help to introduce you to some of the broader principles of online safety. This will be useful if you are worried about bullying as well as your child's general safety online.

Understanding mobile technologies

Children and young people use mobile technology and the internet to communicate; to talk to and connect with people who, for the most part, they know or who share similar interests. respectme's 2014 research showed that 81% of children surveyed consider their online friends to be mostly the same as their day to day friends.

Smart phones are mobiles with additional features that let you chat to more than one person at a time, share pictures, get fast internet access and applications that provide access to social media and gaming platforms.

'App' is short for 'applications' that allow you to do things on your smart phone you would once have only been able to do on a computer. One

click or tap on an icon lets you check the weather, take or edit pictures, catch up on football scores, play games, log onto Facebook and Snapchat, or buy clothes. Some phones have these pre-loaded, others can be downloaded, and some will cost money while others are free.

Smart phones can also connect with other smart phones through wireless technology. They can allow you to share music, pictures and be contacted by someone else nearby. Parents and carers need to make sure children and young people are aware that this is the case, and ensure that their phone settings are as safe as possible. We would advise that pass codes always be set up on phones to stop others accessing information, private conversations or pictures. These should not be shared with friends.

Social media sites

Social networking or social media sites are used by children and young people as a key way of communicating and building relationships, or making new friends online.

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are online 'communities' of people who are friends or who share interests and activities, and communicate through the use of messages, videos and vlogs, which are similar to online diaries. 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 this way is vast.

You can decide who sees your information on social networking sites; just the contacts on your friends list, people they are also connected to, or it can be visible to anyone who is online. Making sure children and young people have the appropriate privacy settings is very important.

The default settings for most social media sites are not private. Their information, pictures and postings are not private unless they specifically make them so. Unless you help them to make their profile or account 'Private', anyone anywhere can read it, copy it and share it.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging allows people to chat to each other online in real time. It is like a text conversation between two or more people where they invite or choose who to chat with.

There is no 'limit' on the number of messages or chats they have. Many phone contracts or top-ups will limit the number of text messages but messaging apps use the internet connection so are only limited by the amount of 'data' a person has. Snapchat and WhatsApp are very popular – they provide a fun and easy way of sending pictures and messages to individuals or with a wider group.

You may top-up your child's phone and they will have 1 GB (Giga Bytes) of 'data' – which dictates

the amount of time they have for accessing the internet through their phone's 4G signal. 4G stands for 4th Generation which provides a really fast internet connection to a phone.

1GB per month might be enough for chatting to friends, using social media and watching short videos. Children and young people who listen to a lot of music, or who watch a lot of videos online, will use a lot more data than this. This could result in some very high additional costs if you pay the bill. It is very important to talk to your child about their data limits – you can 'cap' data use on many contracts, so they cannot go past a certain amount, or you can agree how frequently top-ups will be made. Capping data is something we would recommend.

Encouraging safe use and responsible communication

Parents and Carers can play a key role in helping their child learn how to use and navigate social media and the internet safely, in the same way that we help them learn how to cross the road, how to behave in social settings and how to manage friendships. This can be challenging and it requires parents and carers to keep up to date with what children and young people are doing online, to make sure they do so safely. If we do not do this it is more

difficult to respond to any problems that may arise, and for children and young people to be confident in our ability to help.

Remember the internet is a place, not a thing. It is a social space where children and young people go to socialise and spend time. They want to spend time with and chat to their friends, just like children and young people have always done.

Important points to discuss with children and young people

Privacy and Rights

Children and young people do have the right to privacy; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states this clearly in Article 16; that a child has the right to things like a private diary. This is not new; it's something children and young people have done for generations.

When you lock a diary away in a drawer, you are very clearly saying, 'this is private'. Some children and young people may feel that what they do and say on

social media is just like a diary and, while there is some truth in that, unless they *make* what they say and do online 'private' then the whole world can see it, parents included. When you are online you need to take steps to make what you say private.

Children and young people also have the right to be given guidance by parents and family and the right to be protected from violence. If risks exist online as parents and carers we have a role in preventing and responding to these.

Online relationships are not all that different from relationships face to face

For most young people, the friends they have online will be people they know. But they may also connect with people they do not know, but who share their interests in music, films or football, for example. People online are still real people and they should be treated with the same level of respect and consideration as they would if they were in the same room. It is important to help them initially connect with people they actually know, and to make them aware that making friends face to face and online should take time.

Be mindful of the fact that you are communicating differently

Without the benefit of being able to read gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice, it is easy to misinterpret what may be seen on the screen, for example typing in CAPITAL LETTERS can often be seen as shouting. They may need help in understanding the impact of what they mean to say and what they actually write; sarcasm does not translate well. Children and young people often use pictures to express their feelings and things they like, and apps like Instagram, Tumblr and twitter are great for this.

Never give away personal information

Children and young people should never give out personal information about themselves or another person, their family or friends. This might include where they live, their phone numbers or private email addresses. It is also important never to give private passwords to anyone, including friends or other people that you might trust. They may inadvertently pass it on to other people who can then access your child's account and change information or send messages in their name. This includes letting boyfriends or girlfriends know passwords. They might say it is about trust, but it might really be about controlling and monitoring who your child is talking to.

Be careful what you post

People can act in a way that they wouldn't usually act when they're online. Many children and young people don't think they will be caught and don't fully appreciate just how permanent what they say online is. *respectme's* 2014 research showed that 92% of children bullied online knew who was doing it, so anonymity is not a key factor when it comes to bullying. Ask your child – would you say this if the person was sitting in front of you? If they answer no, tell them 'don't send it'.

Talk to children about what they post – pictures or comments posted in haste can be shared and viewed by many people very quickly, and control of them is lost. Make sure if their photos are 'public' they would be happy for anyone to see them. That includes future employers and parents.

Comments made about people could be considered a Hate Crime if language or hurtful comments are motivated by prejudice towards disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

Sharing pictures of boyfriends or girlfriends, which could be considered sexual or inappropriate in any way, can also be potentially criminal.

There's a history so it can be traced

Everything sent and posted online or through text message can be traced. There's no such thing as anonymity – even a fake email account and information will have a unique IP address from the service provider. People can be traced through their IP address or a SIM card. Children and young people need to be aware of the consequences of posting messages online.

As a parent or carer you should also discuss your child's internet and mobile phone usage. Take an interest in how they use it, what they do online, what sites they like to visit and why. These general conversations can open up the lines of communication to discuss deeper issues and can provide you with a valuable insight into your child's online and mobile phone activity. Agree a

code of conduct; an agreement about how smart phones, laptops or other devices will be used and what will happen if they are misused. Discuss points such as:

- » Sites which are acceptable and unacceptable for them to visit

- » Monthly mobile phone expenditure
- » How long they should spend online – what their data limits are and what will happen if they go over these
- » Agree that passwords will only be shared with you
- » What will happen if your child approaches you with an issue or concern

Parental controls

Parents and carers can also use something like Microsoft Family Safety for laptops and devices at home; this allows you to set limits on time use, what times internet access will be available, and age limits for games or YouTube content. This package will also send you an email update each week showing which websites have been visited. You can also block websites such as Facebook or Twitter if you feel your child is too young to be using them.

If your child is a gamer – X Box live or Play Station Plus has very easy to use parental settings that let you control times, age restrictions and access to the internet through the consoles. This includes limits on who they can or cannot talk to online. There are great videos on websites, such as YouTube, that explain how to use these very easily.

Setting up parental controls takes time, and it can be tempting to let your child get on with it. But taking the time to sit and find out where children and young people go online, and how you can make it safe, will help you both manage the boundaries. It will increase your skills and knowledge of the world they are visiting and will make you more confident to deal with challenges and issues that arise.

These steps are not 100% fool proof and do not take away the need to talk to them about where they go and what they do, especially as they start using the internet and social media. You will know what age and stage your child is at and you can adapt and change the conversations you have based on that. It is important to role model respectful behaviour online. Talking to them about where they go and what they like doing, will also hopefully remove some of the fear around the issue.

Practical steps

Some of these reflect the advice we give on anti-bullying but they are relevant for all types of behaviour online.

Make their profile 'private'

As already stated, profiles should always be made private so that only people who have been accepted as 'friends' can access them. If pages are 'public', or you leave the default settings in place, you are giving access to anyone who wishes to access/view your page. Having an agreement

on profiles being private should be discussed with your child before they sign up.

Make sure 'Location Services' are turned off

You should also make sure their social media sites do not have '**Locations Services**' switched on. This prevents anyone from finding out exactly where they posted from. Remember the default settings for social networking sites are not set to private, so sit down with your child and take steps to make their pages private before they start using them.

These are set in your phone's settings menu and not on the Apps they use.

Delete any comments or posts on their page

Users can delete messages if they are nasty, offensive or they just don't want them to appear on their page. Children and young people often do this and, for some, it will be enough to delete a post and move on. But be mindful of the ongoing impact; deleting a message might not make them feel better as they know it's out there and has already been seen. Sometimes posts can be saved as evidence but it is important not respond to them.

'Block' people

You can effectively deny access to people formerly regarded as 'friends' from seeing, reading, commenting, contacting , or posting messages to your page. Blocking sounds like a very simple and straightforward response but the reality for many children and young people is that blocking can be seen as socially unacceptable. You need to be

mindful of this and explore how they feel about it, and perhaps explore other options instead.

Report abuse

Many social networks allow users to report content, posts or comments that appear on their own page or on other sites that they think contravene the terms and conditions of the site – or those which they consider to be illegal, offensive, harassing or bullying in nature. Social networking sites rely on users making use of these tools to effectively 'police' the site, as they don't have the capacity to monitor each and every profile every day. In general, they advise that nasty comments are ignored and deleted unless they are threatening or illegal, in which case they should be reported to the site administrators and, where applicable, the police.

You can also download a CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) app that stays visible on the webpage and can be clicked to instantly report abuse or get advice – www.ceop.org.uk

Further information, advice and resources for adults and children & young people are available on our website. To find out more visit: www.respectme.org.uk



Where to get help

Further information on dealing with bullying behaviour can be found on the respectme website:

www.respectme.org.uk

T: 0844 800 8600

E: enquire@respectme.org.uk

If your child is being bullied and would like to speak to an adult in confidence, they can contact the Childline on **0800 1111**.

If you are worried about your child and would like to talk to someone in confidence, you can call **ParentLine Scotland on 08000 28 22 23**. Lines are open Monday, to Friday 9am to 9pm.



respectme
Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service

T: 0844 800 8600

E: enquire@respectme.org.uk

W: www.respectme.org.uk

 www.twitter.com/_respectme_



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