

Cyberbullying

In the UK, a huge proportion of children and young people claim to have been the target of cyberbullying, making this one of the most important new areas of behaviour to understand and to equip schools, carers and young people with the ability to respond.

For many children, the internet isn't simply a convenient way to research or a fun afterschool activity - it's a big part of their social life. Emailing and chatting with friends are children's most common online activities, after studying and playing games. But like many other social situations, some children bully others.

Cyberbullying is similar to other types of bullying, except it takes place online and through text messages sent to mobile phones. Cyberbullies can be classmates, online acquaintances, and even anonymous users, but most often they do know their victims.

Since most cyberbullying takes place at home, it's important that parents know about cyberbullying and that they get involved in preventing it. Just like parents help their children avoid inappropriate websites, they can protect them from cyberbullying.

Advice for parents

- Tell your children that you won't blame them if they are cyberbullied. Emphasise that you won't take away their computer privileges - this is the main reason children don't tell adults when they are cyberbullied.
- Keep your home computer in a busy area of your house.
- Discuss cyberbullying with your children and ask if they have ever experienced it or seen it happen to someone.
- Regularly go over their instant messenger "buddy list" with them. Ask who each person is and how your children know him or her.
- Set up email and chat accounts with your children. Make sure that you know their screen names and passwords and that they don't include any personal information in their online profiles.
- Be supportive and understanding