



Cyber bullying: information for professionals

What is cyber bullying?

The Government describes cyber bullying as:

'The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else.'

(Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007)

Some common ways that technology is used to bully others are:

Through mobile phones e.g.

- Sending nasty or threatening texts
- Sending horrible photos/video clips of someone to other people
- Making silent or threatening phone calls

Through the internet e.g.

- Sending unwanted emails to someone; sending horrible emails about someone, sending emails from someone's address
- Sending threatening or upsetting messages to someone in a chat room or Instant Messenger
- Putting pictures, horrible blogs or pages, online polls or messages to or about someone on social networking or other internet sites

The Government has produced detailed guidance about cyber bullying – you can download it from our website

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/bullying

Nationally, concern about cyber bullying is growing; the numbers of children and young people reporting that they have been cyber bullied in research varies between 11 and 34% (DCSF 2007). As the use of technology increases it seems likely that the misuse of it to bully others will also increase and, along with children and young people, cyber bullying is a particular concern for people working with children and young people who may find themselves targeted in a way that does not occur with other types of bullying.

The impact of cyber bullying can be devastating for several reasons, including:

- There is no escape – it can reach you anywhere, even in your own home
- The audience can be very large and reached very quickly
- One incident can become repeated attacks as it is passed around or posted onto different websites

Although cyber bullying itself is not a specific criminal act there are several laws relating to the use of technology that can be used to tackle it – full details are available in the government guidance. In addition, since September 2007 schools have had the power to take action when pupils misbehave outside of school, "to such extent as is reasonable" (Education and Inspections Act 2006). This includes involvement in cyber bullying and schools should state how they will tackle this in their anti-bullying or behaviour policy.

Tackling cyber bullying in Warwickshire

Warwickshire's Anti-bullying Partnership have taken cyber bullying as a key theme in 2007/8. It is impossible to 'police' the use of new technology and so, therefore, we need to educate young people and those that support them, including parents and carers, to encourage responsible behaviour online and support the development of strategies for handling cyber bullying. To do this we have several projects either already underway or in the pipeline, for example:

- We have developed some resources for use with young people
- We have had an online pledge against cyber bullying (www.wpthezone.co.uk)
- We are developing and piloting some family learning materials about cyber bullying
- We are developing some training materials for professionals

To find out more or to receive any of the resources we are developing please contact us by ringing 01926 742519 or email bullying@warwickshire.gov.uk