

# Online Abuse: The Risks

## Harder to escape it

Children may have access to a phone, tablet or computer 24/7. It means the abuse can be continuous and there is little relief from it for the child.

## Greater opportunity

Abusers can access children online much easier than in person. They can pretend to be someone else, such as a child of a similar age, and therefore groom and trick a child more easily.

## It is ever changing

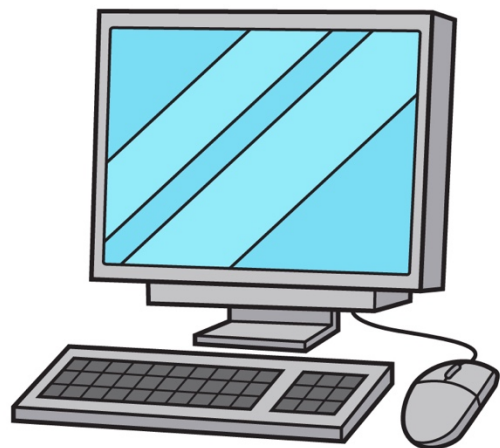
The nature of the online world is competitive and ever evolving. There are always new opportunities for abusers to access children. New online trends take place on a regular basis and it can be hard to keep track of what is relevant and what is not.

## Children are more tech savvy than their parents

It is the parents' role to protect their children but that is made harder when they do not know what they are protecting their children from and how to protect them. Children may be savvier online but generally know less about the risks which makes this a complex dynamic.

## Little regulation

There are age limits on social media and websites, but this is easily bypassed. Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg has been criticised for his lack of action on online abuse and for prioritising privacy over safeguarding. His decision to encrypt messages will only make it easier for groomers to target children for abuse.



# How can you help victims?

If you are concerned about someone being a victim of cyberbullying, you can support them by:

- Talking about it. They may not understand or know what cyberbullying is or that it is wrong.
- They may be embarrassed, scared or ashamed and could be worried about what will happen next. Stay calm, reassure them that everything will be okay and listen to what they are saying.
- If the person doesn't feel comfortable talking, provide them with details of support lines that could help them.
- You can report the bullying to the platform on which it has taken place. They can remove the posts and report users to the police.
- If you work in education, report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and follow your organisation's safeguarding policy and procedure. If you work in health and social care, report to your Manager.
- If you feel that someone is at immediate risk of harm, contact children's or adult's social services for further advice and guidance.

Support children, young people and adults to stay safe online by helping them to understand:

- What cyberbullying is.
- What action they can take if they feel something online has upset or distressed them in any way.
- That it is important to think about what they are posting on social media, before they do so.
- How to block people they no longer want to communicate with.
- That not everyone is who they say they are online.

## Who can you contact for more information and guidance?

**Childnet** – An international, not for profit organisation that aims to support others to make the internet a great and safe place for children. Provides access to a wealth of free resources.

**Internet Watch Foundation** – They work internationally to make the internet safer by removing images of child sexual abuse.

**Think U Know** – Education programmes for children to help them stay safe online.

**UK Safer Internet** – Provides online safety tips to help children and young people stay safe online.

**Mencap** – Organisation for people with learning disabilities to help them understand what cyberbullying is.