<u>Online Abuse</u>

(Information taken from NSPCC - https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/online-abuse/)

The internet can be a great place for children and young people to play, learn and connect. But it can also put them at risk of online abuse. That's why we've got advice and support for you and your child. Together we can keep children safe online.

What is online abuse?

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including:

- social media
- text messages and messaging apps
- emails
- online chats
- online gaming
- live-streaming sites.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online.

Types of online abuse

Children and young people might experience different types of online abuse, such as:

cyberbullying

Cyberbullying or online bullying is any type of bullying that happens online.

Unlike bullying that takes place offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go and it can sometimes feel like there's no escape or safe space.

Our bullying and cyberbulling page has more information on online bullying, including the types of cyberbullying, the signs and what you can do to protect your child.

emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child and this can happen both on and offline.

grooming

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a child so they can sexually abuse, exploit or traffic them. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face by a stranger or by someone they know.

If you're worried a child is being groomed online you should report it online to CEOP.

sexting

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexual messages. It's online abuse if a child or young person is pressured or coerced into creating or sending these types of images.

We've got advice on sexting, including the risks and how to talk to your child about it.

sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is forced or tricked into sexual activies. Sexual abuse can happen online - for example, a child could be forced to make, view or share child abuse images or videos or take part in sexual activities on conversations online.

sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse. When a child is sexually exploited online they may be persuaded or forced to create sexually explicit photos or videos or have sexual conversations.

Signs of online abuse

A child or young person experiencing abuse online might:

- spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming or using social media
- seem distant, upset or angry after using the internet or texting
- be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone
- have lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

Some of the signs of online abuse are similar to other abuse types:

- cyberbullying
- grooming
- sexual abuse
- child sexual exploitation.

If a child reveals online abuse

It can be difficult to know what to say and do if a child tells you they're being abused online. They might not realise what's happening is wrong. And they might even blame themselves. If a child talks to you about online abuse it's important to:

- listen carefully to what they're saying
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- say you'll take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

Effects of online abuse

Online abuse can have long-lasting effects on children and young people. It can lead to:

- anxiety
- self-harm
- eating disorders
- suicidal thoughts.

Some of the effects of online abuse are similar to other abuse types:

- cyberbullying
- grooming
- sexual abuse

- child sexual exploitation.

Who's at risk

Any child who uses the internet can be at risk of online abuse. It's important parents are aware of the risks and talk to their child about staying safe online.

Support

For parents and carers

- Net Aware
  Our no-nonsense guide to the social networks, sites and apps your children are using.
- Share Aware
  We've teamed up with O2 to help you keep your child safe on social networks, apps and games. Read our advice on how to Be Share Aware.
- Online safety advice
  Whether you're an online expert or you're not sure where to start, our tools and advice will help you keep your child safe.
- Parent Info
  A website for parents about life online.
- ThinkUKnow
  A website from National Crime Agency's CEOP Command about keeping children and young people safe on the internet.
- UK Safer Internet Centre
  Promoting the safe and responsible use of technology for young people.
- Internet Matters
  A site to help empower parents and carers to keep children safe in a digital world.

We're here to support you, no matter your worry. Call us on 0808 800 5000, email help@nspcc.org.uk or fill in our online form.

For children and young people

- ThinkUKnow has age specific advice for children aged 4 through to teenagers.
- Own It is the BBC's dedicated site for helping young people with life online.

How Childline can help

Childline also has lots of helpful advice on their website, on topics such as:

- cyberbullying (online bullying)
- bullying on social networks
- building confidence after online bullying
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse.

Childline's Zipit app helps young people take control of their online chats.

We understand how difficult it is for children to talk about online abuse. Whether it's happening now or happened in the past, Childline can be contacted 24/7. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and confidential. Children can also contact Childline online.