

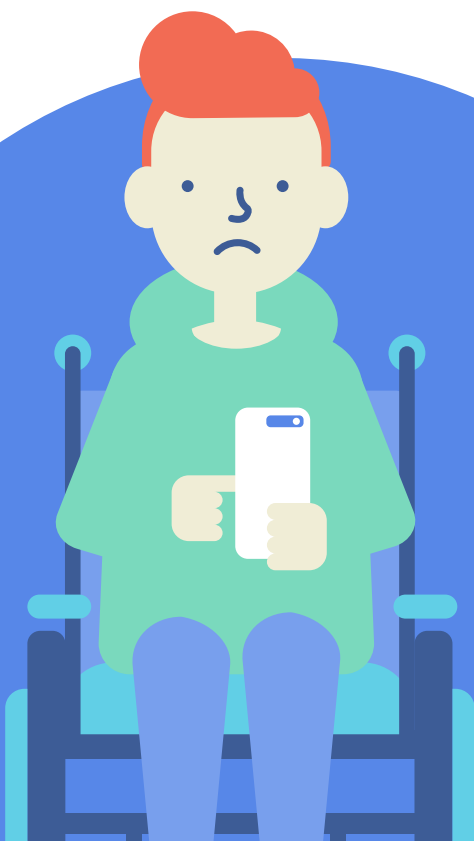
Empowering young people with additional learning needs to connect safely online.

Tackling Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is mostly done by people your child knows. People can hide behind fake profiles online to avoid being caught and it's often an extension of what is happening at school or an activity club.

It can reach children at anytime and anywhere with some children finding it hard to recognise bullying or remembering the details of the incident.



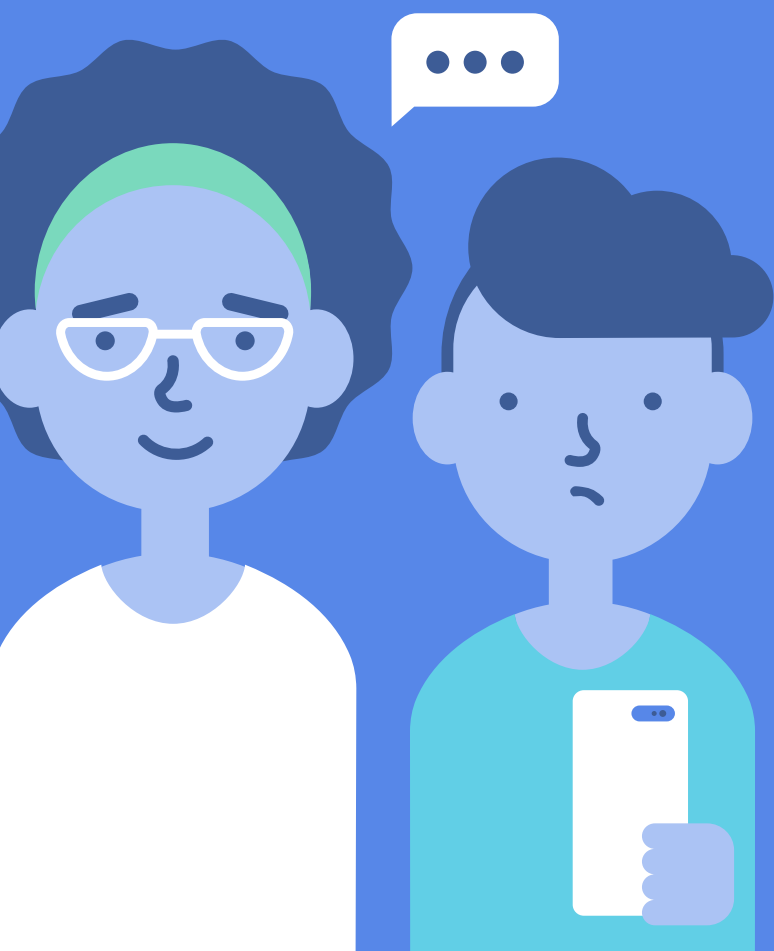
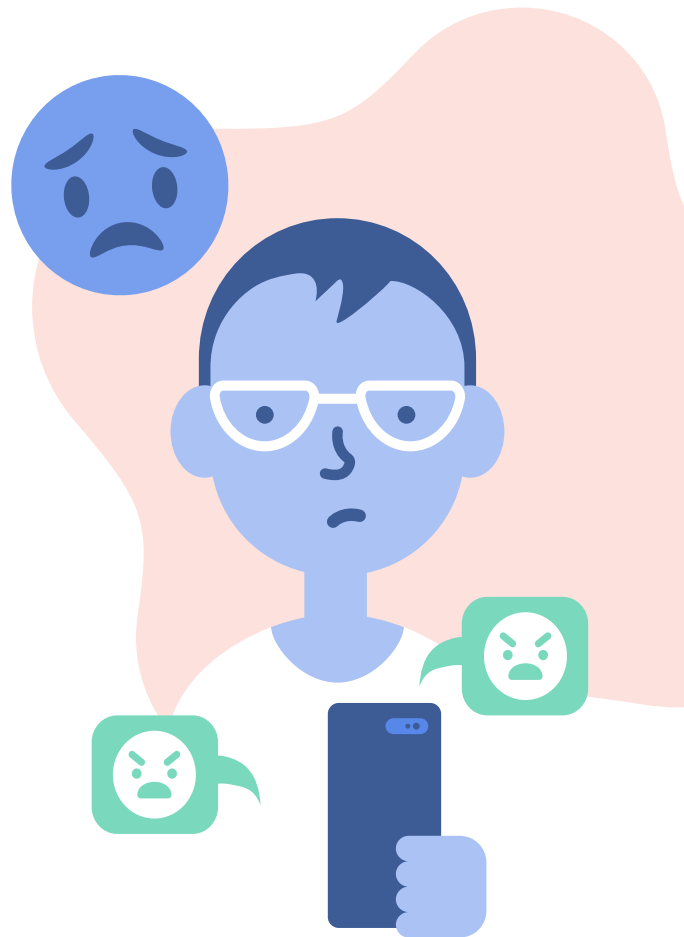
From our [Vulnerable report](#), we know that **having a communication difficulty is significantly associated with the experience of cyberbullying.**

Children and young people have told us that 'arguments, cyberbullying, people being mean, negative comments', were issues that they were affected by on social media. [\[source\]](#)

How children may experience cyberbullying

For children with SEND, cyberbullying often takes the form of:

- **Manipulative relationships**
This is hard to spot as often your child may feel that those manipulating him/her are their friends and may feel pressure to do what their 'friends' say because they want to stay part of the group
- **Exploitative relationships**
This is usually done by someone your child knows very well as it relies on a person knowing to target your child's triggers to bait them into doing something or getting angry or upset for their entertainment
- **Conditional relationship**
This involves a person making your child believe they have a close relationship in order to demand things from them at times in secret. This shows why it's important to think about their emotional needs rather than simply enforcing rules



Steps to tackle if your child is a victim of cyberbullying

If your child is being cyberbullied, they may find it hard to recognise it or even tell you who is doing the bullying, so it's important to:

- **Be aware of the friends they have online and offline** to establish the type of relationships they have with them
- Consider why your child may **be seeking to retain certain friendships if they appear to be toxic**. They may be looking to fulfil an emotional need to be liked or to feel part of a group if they often feel isolated

To help them see that something may be wrong in a relationship:

- **Explain the reasons why** it may put them at risk
- Redirect their need to feel popular or part of a group through other means, **for example setting up a close friends group** on social media and encouraging family members and genuine friends to 'like' their posts
- Think about ways to help them meet other young people in **safe environments**
- Together **explore what a good friend looks like** and what the nature of a good relationship is

Some young people have little idea of what a good relationship looks like and do things they believe are expected. They can be too trusting and believe someone who says they love them, even when they are being hurt or manipulated.



If your child says they have received upsetting messages, or a situation has developed that has upset them:

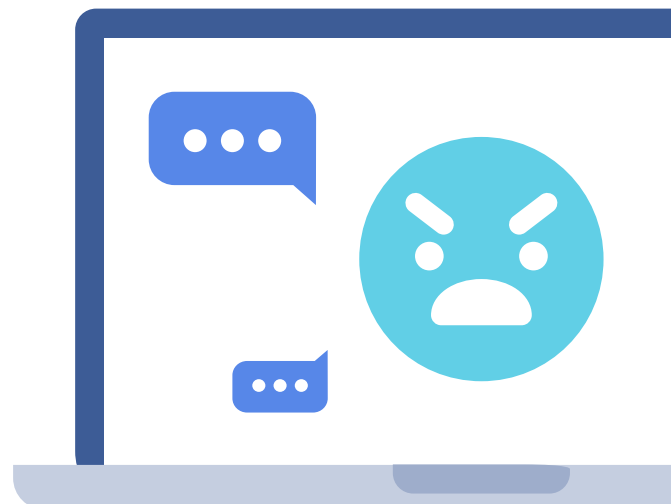
- **Stay calm** (it will upset them further to see that you are also distressed)
- **Thank them for telling you**, they did the right thing
- **Remind them** bullying or aggression is always unacceptable
- **Explain** that together you will deal with this
- **Save the evidence**, you will need it to report it and block or restrict the sender

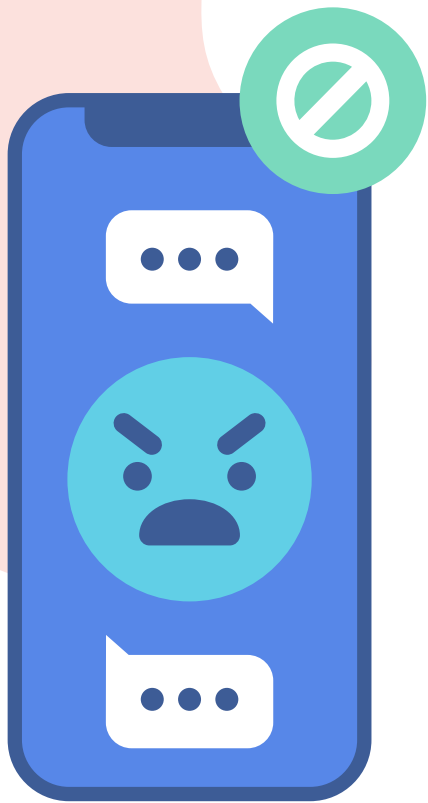
My child is saying hurtful things online

It can be hard to understand the reasons why your child would bully others especially if it's out of character but **it's important to try and establish the facts around the incident and keep an open mind.**

Your child might also unintentionally upset friends if they have communication or language difficulties and find it hard to express themselves.

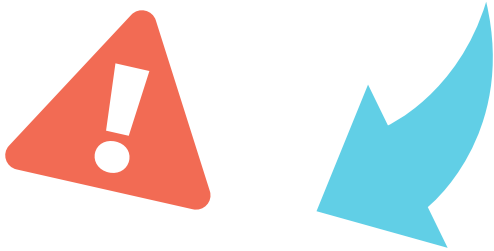
If you think your child has been unfairly represented, then put your concerns in writing to the school or the platform. You can also reach out to specialist organisations and individuals that work as trusted flaggers who can support you in reporting your concerns to the platforms your child is using. Such as ['report harmful content online'](#).





Steps to tackle if your child is saying hurtful things to others

- **Ask them to stop** and have an open conversation about the situation
- **Try and find out the reason why** to understand how to stop it from happening again. Is it intentional or unintentional behaviour?
- **Explain the severity of the issue** and the possible consequences (losing friends, getting their school or even the police involved)
- Help them understand the **impact of their actions** on the person or people they are targeting
- **Encourage them to exhibit positive behaviour** such as respect, and compassion and discourage bullying behaviour by incentivising positive behaviour
- **Be patient** and give your child some time to take on board the positive behaviour and show them that they have your support.



Important conversations to have

- Discuss with them the **dangers of expressing feelings of hurt or anger online** and come up with other ways that they can manage feelings of hurt that won't have a negative impact on others
- **Talk about the blurred line** between uploading and sharing content because it's funny or might get lots of 'likes', versus the potential to cause offence or hurt. Some examples include uploading videos of fights among classmates provoked for entertainment
- **Discuss how to respond if they see offensive content online** and what might be good, or not so good to share. Through conversations or social stories, talk about how it might feel to be cyberbullied and what they could do to support others.



Where to go for help



Social media platforms:

Most gaming and social platforms will have a way for you to report cyberbullying directly on the platform. Visit

[Report Harmful Content website for support](#)



School:

If they are being cyberbullied by a school friend, report it to the school. They'll have a safeguarding officer and a reporting procedure you can use to raise your concerns.

Visit the [Internet Matters website to learn more](#)



Police:

If the bullying targets their disability, report it to the police as this can be classed as a hate crime.

Cyberbullying resources

Here are some available resources from these organisations about cyberbullying:



[Anti Bullying Alliance - leaflet](#)



[Anti Bullying Alliance - interactive tools for parents and carers](#)



[Mencap](#)



[Kidscape](#)



[Internet Matters](#)