

# *Cyberbullying Action Plan*



THE ROYAL FOUNDATION  
of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge  
and Prince Harry

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*The Royal Foundation's Taskforce on the Prevention of Cyberbullying*



## *Preamble*

We, the Members of the Royal Foundation's Taskforce on the Prevention of Cyberbullying (the "Taskforce"), recognising the detrimental impact of cyberbullying, agree to the elements of the Action Plan set out below, as they apply to our industry and/or organisation.

We will not tolerate the cyberbullying of children and young people and agree to implement the elements of the Action Plan relating to our own industry.

We agree to evaluate the impact of the Action Plan regularly, to assess what has worked and identify and address any challenges.

We will encourage other social media and gaming platforms, communication service providers, and technology companies to follow our lead and help prevent the cyberbullying of children and young people by signing up to, and supporting implementation of the Action Plan.



### *Complying with guidelines to ensure children and young people are kept safe online*

1. Social media and gaming platforms will adhere to the Taskforce's Design for Safety Guidelines (Appendix 1). The guidelines contain provisions to promote:
  - a. Increased education and awareness about cyberbullying;
  - b. A clear and transparent reporting process;
  - c. Provision of emotional support for when things go wrong online;
  - d. Clear explanations of the consequences of misconduct online.
2. Social media and gaming platforms will design any new products or functionality with the consideration of children and young people's needs in mind.
3. Social media and gaming platforms will provide written updates on how they have progressed against the Taskforce's Design for Safety Guidelines (Appendix 1), ahead of future meetings of the Taskforce (see Point 19 and 20).

### *Providing emotional support for those affected by cyberbullying*

4. Between November 2017 and March 2018 (the "Pilot Period"), the NSPCC, Facebook and Snapchat will pilot and evaluate the signposting to, and provision of emotional support including self-help content, on a dedicated platform. The platform will provide access to one-to-one counselling.
5. As soon as possible, whether during or after the Pilot Period, the NSPCC, Facebook and Snapchat will test and evaluate a mechanism for the NSPCC to escalate reports with social media platforms on behalf of young people who have reported cyberbullying.
6. In May 2018 the NSPCC, Facebook and Snapchat will share the outcomes of their pilot with the other Members of the Taskforce to determine the means by which the emotional support platform can be scaled up and supported in the long term (see Point 20).
7. Social media and gaming platforms will continue to signpost their users to emotional support after the Pilot Period and will use the pilot's evaluation to inform how they integrate the provision of emotional support into all their products.
8. Beyond the Pilot Period, the NSPCC will look to signpost a range of emotional support including self-help, peer to peer support and counselling.

### *Improving the understanding of children and young people*

9. The BBC will launch a dedicated website to help children develop competency, confidence and resilience in the digital space.
10. The Members of the Taskforce who generate advice and information on cyberbullying for young people will, so far as they are able, provide the BBC with their content and information to ensure the dedicated website can be curated to reflect and signpost the best and most current resources for children and young people.





### *Improving the understanding of parents and other 'influential adults'*

11. The Members of the Taskforce who generate advice and information on cyberbullying for parents and other 'influential adults' will signpost the resources of other Taskforce Members to ensure parents and other 'influential adults' have a range of good quality information to help them best support children and young people in their care.
12. The Members of the Taskforce will provide consistent messaging when providing support and information for parents and other 'influential adults' (see Appendix 2).

### *Campaign delivery to support the code of conduct designed by children and young people*

13. The Members of the Taskforce will support the launch of the Taskforce's campaign promoting the Code of Conduct for children and young people (see Appendix 3) both financially (industry Members, as listed in Appendix 4) and with in-kind marketing support (all Members) to enable the campaign to reach all young people aged 11 to 16, parents and other 'influential adults' across the United Kingdom.
14. The Members of the Taskforce will provide support both during the initial wave of campaign activity (16 November 2017 to 6 February 2018) and beyond, to ensure the Code of Conduct is sustainable and easily accessible today and in years to come.
15. The Members of the Taskforce will promote the Code of Conduct through the campaign or otherwise at least once a year.

### *Working in collaboration with children and young people*

16. The Anti-Bullying Alliance, Diana Award and the NSPCC will convene a panel of children and young people (aged 11 to 16) on a regular basis to:
  - a. review the Action Plan to ensure the elements remain current and meaningful, providing observations based on their experience of cyberbullying;
  - b. support the compliance mechanism for the Design for Safety Guidelines (see Point 5 in Appendix 1).
17. The Anti-Bullying Alliance will be responsible for convening and managing the panel of children and young people, including the arranging of reports back to Members of the Taskforce.

### *Technological solutions that support children and young people's emotional wellbeing online*

18. The Members of the Taskforce will continue to review technological solutions that support children and young people's emotional wellbeing online, and the potential opportunities those solutions present for further collaboration.



### *Future meetings and working in collaboration with others*

19. The Members of the Taskforce will work to ensure that the elements of this Action Plan complement and help inform work to improve internet safety across the United Kingdom, whether it be led by industry, the voluntary sector or government.
20. The Members of the Taskforce will meet:
- a. In May 2018 to review:
    - i. the social media and gaming platforms' reports against the Design for Safety Guidelines (as outlined in Point 5 in Appendix 1);
    - ii. the outcomes of the emotional support platform pilot and determine the means by which the emotional support platform can be supported in the long term;
    - iii. the resources available to children and young people, parents and other 'influential adults';
    - iv. the campaign supporting the code of conduct;
    - v. technological solutions that support children and young people's emotional wellbeing online.
  - b. In November 2018 for a review of progress with the Action Plan one year on.



## *Appendix 1: Design for Safety Guidelines*

Social media and gaming platforms within the Taskforce, agree that the following guidelines will help promote online safety and will use best endeavours to implement them where appropriate.

These guidelines build upon UKCCIS' 'Child Safety Online: A Practical Guide for the Providers of Social Media and Interactive Services', published in March 2016. As such, the social media and gaming platforms within the Taskforce are committed to the implementation of the UKCCIS Guide, where it applies to them, and these guidelines.

### **1. Increased education and awareness about cyberbullying**

- a. Policies of the platform should be expressed in plain language that can be understood by users.
- b. Policies about behaviour should be accessible and separate from the main terms and conditions of a platform.
- c. Regular reminders of the policies should be presented in engaging formats across different typical user journeys.

### **2. A clear and transparent reporting process**

- a. Platforms should manage user expectation by providing information, in language appropriate to the audience, explaining:
  - i. how reports are dealt with and how the outcome will be communicated.
  - ii. The point at which the user has completed the process and no further communication will be provided.
  - iii. Platforms should consider appropriate ways to communicate reports with users beyond emails.

### **3. Provision of emotional support for those affected by cyberbullying**

- a. Platforms should incorporate signposting to emotional support. If possible, the signposting should be incorporated into the reporting process at point of need.
- b. Platforms should provide information about additional tools / settings that can be used by the user to control their experience and third parties who provide additional support.

### **4. Clear explanations of the consequences for misconduct online**

- a. Users should be made aware of the consequences of misconduct which is contrary to the policies of the platform. Information about the consequences should be incorporated in the regular reminders of the platform's policies.
- b. Platforms should consistently enforce the consequences of misconduct. Where action has been taken, and in appropriate circumstances, the platform should notify the user who reported the misconduct and the user who breached the platform's policies.
- c. Platforms should provide education on appropriate online conduct to users who breach the platform policies. This education should be provided in an engaging format relevant to the target audience.



## 5. Guidelines compliance mechanism

- a. State of the nation view: For the Department of Education and Ofcom to include relevant questions in their 'Pupils and their parents or carers omnibus survey' and 'Children and parents: media use and attitudes survey' to understand trends in the overall increase or decrease of cyberbullying.
- b. The Anti-Bullying Alliance, The Diana Award and the NSPCC to convene a panel of children and young people (aged 11 to 16) on a regular basis to review the Taskforce's Action Plan to ensure the elements remain current and meaningful. This will include reviewing the Guidelines, their perception of whether platforms are delivering this for them, and whether they address everything children and young people expect of providers, based on their own experience of cyberbullying. The Anti-Bullying Alliance will be responsible for convening and managing the panel of children and young people including the arranging of reports back to Members of the Taskforce.
- c. Social media platforms to provide a written update on how they have progressed against the Guidelines ahead of future meetings of the Taskforce. In 2018 this will be May (six months) and November (twelve months).



## *Appendix 2: Editorial framework for communicating with parents and other 'influential adults'*

### *Protecting Children*

#### **1. Involvement**

The best way to keep your child safe online is to take an active interest right from the start. What your child is exposed to will depend on how they're using the internet. Children who are communicating with others are more likely to experience cyberbullying, see sexual or violent images, or have contact with strangers.

#### **2. Conversations**

The earlier you can talk to your child about making positive behaviour choices online, the better. It is important to have regular conversations with your child to stay actively engaged, encouraging a two-way dialogue, and helping them develop their critical thinking and judgement skills. It's important to let your child know they can always come to you if they experience anything that concerns or upsets them.

Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- Who do they want to be online?
- How much should they share about themselves?
- How much time should they spend online?
- What can they do if they see something horrible or something bad happens?
- What if they make a mistake or do something they later regret?
- How can they know what and who to trust online?
- How can they make the online world better for other people?

#### **3. Setting up safely**

As a parent, you have some decisions to make about how you want your child to engage online and on social media and what measures you want to put in place to help protect them:

- Use parental controls in the app stores to control the apps your child can download.
- Try out any social media, messaging services, and online games that your child is using for yourself, preferably exploring them together.
- Take into consideration the age ratings for social networks / PEGI ratings for games.
- Spend time together looking at the privacy settings. It's always best to assume that default settings are public and should be changed accordingly.
- Check if apps are using geo-location services and turn them off to prevent the location of your child being accessible.
- Set up a good profile which avoids sharing personal information and images.
- Encourage them to only be friends with people they know in real life.
- Avoid sharing personal information like school, age and place they live, both in text and in photos.





- There are apps and software that allow you to monitor and control your child's online activities. Take into consideration your child's maturity and their need for privacy.
- Report abuse, harassment and anything upsetting to the platform provider.
- Learn how to block, mute and report people on social media platforms.

#### 4. Manage social activity on an ongoing basis

Keep talking and take an interest in what your child does online:

- Help them use the most age appropriate apps.
- Help your child to look closely at what people say online – and not to believe everything they see and read.
- Work out together how to use privacy settings, and how the reporting and blocking tools work in case you ever need them.
- Agree how to respond to friend requests and communication from strangers.
- Encourage your child to let you know if something they've seen or read has upset them so you can talk it through together.
- Help them to know when to take time out, e.g. when certain friends and followers are no longer good to have around.
- Suggest regular breaks from online activity.
- Encourage your child to talk to you, or to someone they trust if they need advice about anything they've seen or done online.
- Agree what behaviour is acceptable online – if they wouldn't do it offline, then they shouldn't do it online either.
- Talk to your child about what they share online and who they share it with. The 'poster' or 't-shirt' test are helpful. If they wouldn't share it there, then don't share online.
- Encourage your child to think about their lasting digital footprint and online reputation.
- Share examples of positive social media activity for example of a positive campaign online or kind words that have been shared.

### *Deal with cyberbullying*

#### I. Spot the signs

Your child might be reluctant to tell you that they are worried about cyberbullying so it's important to look out for the signs:

- Stopping using their electronic devices suddenly or unexpectedly.
- Seeming nervous or jumpy when using their devices, or becoming obsessive about being constantly online.
- Anxious or upset after using devices.
- Any changes in behaviour such as becoming sad, withdrawn, angry, or lashing out especially after using devices.
- Reluctance to go to school or take part in usual social activities.
- Unexplained physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach upsets.
- Avoiding discussions about what they're doing online or who they're talking to.



## 2. Take immediate action and talk about it

Create opportunities to talk to your child in a relaxed environment:

- Stay calm and ask them how you can help.
- Ask open questions and listen without judging.
- Praise them for talking to you and say you will work together to sort things out.
- Don't take away their devices unless this is what they want, it's likely to make them angry and increase feelings of sadness and isolation and they may then be less reluctant to share concerns with you.



If your child is upset by something they've experienced online then advice you can give includes:

- It might be tempting to retaliate or respond to hurtful comments but this has unpredictable consequences, can make arguments last longer, and make it harder to see who's in the wrong.
- Try not to involve lots of others in online arguments. This includes being careful what they post, what they share, and knowing when to leave a group chat or change the conversation.
- Ask people to take down hurtful or offensive content.
- Your child may be successful by simply being honest about how they feel, particularly if the perpetrator didn't mean to cause them harm.

## 3. Approaching perpetrators

You may feel you can discuss the bullying behaviour with the other child's parent. Always proceed with caution. It's natural for a parent to defend their child, so make sure you're calm and ask for their help to resolve the situation rather than accusing their child. Remember they may have another side to the story. Your goal should always be to stop the bullying behaviour.

## 4. Take action online

- Choose to mute, block or unfriend.  
Encourage your child to mute, block or unfriend the person that has caused them hurt – particularly if they're an anonymous user or not known to your child. Your child might be reluctant to do this if they consider the person a 'friend' or they know the person from school or the local community as it may cause further problems. Revisit what it means to be a friend and talk about healthy online relationships.
- Report or flag upsetting content.  
Report or flag content that breaches the platform's user agreement. Be aware that the thresholds for offensive content, the process for reviewing reports and the time it takes to remove content varies according to the social network, game or app.
- Save the evidence.  
Keep a record of events in case you need to seek professional help. Screen grab offensive content or save messages. It might not help your child to keep seeing these, so offer to keep them some where safe for them. Importantly, if you are dealing with a sexual image of a child under 18, it is illegal to copy or distribute the image. Contact CEOP immediately who can advise you what action to take and provide further support.





## 5. Report to school

If the person or people doing the bullying are from your child's school or club you should contact the school about it, as all schools have a responsibility to protect their pupils. How the school responds will vary depending on their anti-bullying policy, and some may offer peer to peer support, for example The Diana Award Ambassadors programme. All state schools should have a policy, and may have mentors who can help.

Tips to remember:

- Your child is the most important person – make sure their needs and wants remain central.
- Keep calm – remember the school may not be aware of what's happening. Ask to see child's teacher / tutor / Head of Year.
- Bring evidence – keep a record of events and any evidence (e.g. print outs of screen shots, saved messages).
- Be goal orientated – the priority is for the bullying behaviour to stop. Consider practical ways that the school can help (e.g. talk to students involved / provide your child with support).
- Set a date / time to follow up – make sure you leave the meeting / phone call with an agreed day or time to check in on progress made.

## 6. Escalating with school

- Don't give up – the school has a legal duty to prevent all forms of bullying.
- Ask for another meeting as a matter of urgency. This time you may want to meet with a senior member of staff.
- Bring your record of action / outcomes and any evidence of further bullying.
- Be goal orientated – what could the school do differently? Is there any additional support they can give your child (e.g. counselling services).
- If necessary follow the school complaints process.
- Don't stop until the bullying stops.
- Develop an action plan to make sure you stay on track.
- Use template letters to get the message across.

## 7. Report to police

There is not a law against cyberbullying but some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws including the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. If the content is sexual, targeted at your child's ethnicity, gender, disability or perceived sexuality, if threats are being made to harm your child or incite your child to harm themselves, then consider reporting the activity to the police. The response you receive will depend on the nature and severity of the incident, whether it's likely that a crime has been committed, and whether your child is at risk of harm. You can also contact the Children's Services department in your local authority.

## 8. Providing further emotional support

Experiencing bullying can place a huge strain on a child with links to depression, anxiety and self-harm. As a parent, you should always take it seriously and if you have any worries about your child's mental or physical health see your GP. Many local counselling services offer a sliding scale of cost depending on your family income. It may even be free. This can be quicker than accessing support through your GP. For information about counselling services in your area visit the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) and make sure your child knows about Childline and other helplines for young people.



## APPENDIX 3: THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### STOP

**Action 1:** Take time out before getting involved, and don't share or like negative comments.

**Action 2:** Try and get an overview of what's really going on.

It's easy to misinterpret things so don't jump straight in. Remember there are often several sides to a story so try and understand where everyone's coming from.

**Action 3:** Check the community guidelines for the site you're on.

Every social media site platform has a set of rules about what is and isn't acceptable. These guidelines also have some handy pointers about what to do if you're not happy about stuff, so it's worth checking them out.



### SPEAK

**Action 1:** Ask an adult or friend that you can trust for advice.

Have a word with an adult you trust – it could be a parent or other member of your family, or a teacher or youth worker. Many people don't do this because they're worried about making things worse – but if something's making you uncomfortable, you need to talk about it.

**Action 2:** Use the report button for the social media it's happening on.

If you're concerned about online content or behaviour, please report it to the site or platform you're on. Most social media platforms will follow up with you once something has been reported and keep you informed of their decisions.

**Action 3:** Speak to one of the charities set up to help with situations like this, such as Childline.

Childline can support young people who are experiencing all forms of bullying. If you're worried about yourself or someone you know, they're on hand for support and advice, both online or on the phone.



### SUPPORT

**Action 1:** Give the person being bullied a supportive message to let them know they're not alone.

If a friend's being bullied online, posting or texting them a positive message can make a big difference. It may not solve all their problems, but it's a good way to show them they're not alone.

**Action 2:** Encourage the person being bullied to talk to someone they can trust.

People being bullied can withdraw into themselves. It's really important they open up to someone they trust, especially an adult.

**Action 3:** Give the person being bullied a positive distraction from the situation.

Being bullied can feel overwhelming. Doing things with your friend may help to take their mind off things for a while, and can have a big impact on the way they feel. If you can, send them some stuff that's got nothing to do with the bullying situation. And maybe spend a bit of one-to-one time with them offline.



### *Appendix 4: Industry members*

1. Apple
2. BT
3. EE
4. Facebook
5. Google
6. O2
7. Sky
8. Snapchat
9. Supercell
10. TalkTalk
11. Twitter
12. Virgin Media
13. Vodafone



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The Taskforce was established by The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry to work with the technology industry to develop a series of actions to help prevent the cyberbullying of children and young people, together with the guidance and expertise of charities, not-for-profit organisations and independent advisors. The Members of the Taskforce are The Anti-Bullying Alliance; Apple; BBC; BT; The Diana Award; EE; Facebook; Google; Internet Matters; NSPCC; O2; Sky; Snapchat; Supercell; TalkTalk; Twitter; Virgin Media and Vodafone.

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