Cyberbullying and online harassment campaign 2017

West Mercia POLICE

#Be Cyber Smart
The Virtual World Has Real Life Consequences

mumsnet by parents for parents

childline

internet matters.org

BullyingUK Part of family lives

Worcestershire Children and Young People
At the heart of everything we do

NSPCC

kidscape preventing bullying protecting lives

kooth BETA

79% of young people asked by BullyingUK have seen somebody harassed or bullied online.

This pack contains information to help families, education providers and safeguarding services understand cyberbullying.

This cyberbullying campaign is supported by six national charities and organisations.

You will receive further information, images, videos, interviews, and other resources to help you support this campaign.

Foreword

This pack contains the latest West Mercia Police wide campaign to combat cyberbullying and online harassment among young people.

> The effects of cyberbullying and online harassment can range from personal embarrassment to depression, anxiety and self harm.

They are serious concerns for us as a police force, as well as anybody involved in the care of young people. We have listened to young people, to the voluntary sector and to subject matter experts – together, they've told us that online bullying is one of the biggest issues they now face.

We are writing to you because you are a safeguarding professional, a member of the media or someone who has shown an interest in supporting our communities on this issue. Your support is vital.

Together, we must try to prick the consciences of bullies and make them aware that their actions can have serious consequences. We must also make information and support as widely available as possible so that people experiencing or witnessing bullying know where to turn for help.

Please could you put aside a few minutes to read this pack? It will help you understand what cyberbullying and online harassment is, and the impact it can have. Then you'll be able to help us spread information, advice and support to the people that need it.

If we work together in partnership, with a determined and coordinated focus, we can improve awareness of cyberbullying and online harassment, support our communities, and change behaviour.

Mark Travis
Chief Superintendent
West Mercia Police

Introduction

From 16-20 October 2017, West Mercia Police is working with a number of charities, schools, caring professionals, and other partners to share information about cyberbullying and online harassment.

> Together, we want to reach as many young people – and their parents/carers and teachers – as we can. You can help us do that.

We'll offer support and advice for people worried about becoming victims of online harassment and bullying. We'll also explain what online harassment and bullying are, why they are serious – sometimes criminal – issues, and how to tackle bullying.

To help you spread the message, we can provide you with:

- Advice sheets, online content, links and images.
- Links to a video with Lucy Alexander, whose son took his own life after cyberbullying.
- Special animation for young people.
- Interviews with, and information from, senior members of our police force West Mercia Police.
- Social media posts for you to share or copy.

All our resources will still be available after the campaign ends. Please just ask if you'd like any more support or information – our contact details are at the end of this pack.

Background

In researching the effects of cyberbullying on the development of young people, it is hard to find meaningful national data. Research by voluntary sector organisations helps us build up a picture:

- **2015/16:** the NSPCC experienced an 88% increase in calls related to online bullying.
- **2016/17:** Childline carried out 24,000 counselling sessions for bullying, and estimates that 16,000 school children are absent from school each year as a result of bullying.

It's now widely recognised that cyberbullying does not respect geographic boundaries – it can happen anywhere, at any time, across multiple online platforms.

It is hard to assess the demands that cyberbullying creates for social care, the impacts upon education through absence from school and the impacts upon health through anxiety, depression and self-harm.

We may never obtain the true social and financial costs. However, it's clear that in addition to the social and wellbeing costs, this issue is affecting public sector finances.

High profile case studies in the media have drawn public attention to some tragic cases where the scale and impact of the bullying has led to self-harm:

Sam Abel (age 14), on 8 January 2017, stepped off the roof of a car park in Worcester. Sam fell to ground and despite the efforts of many, he later died in hospital from significant head injuries. Sam had experienced sustained bullying through the social media platforms.

Felix Alexander (age 17) stepped in front of a train on 26 April 2016, after being bullied in person and online. The bullying took place both at home and at school. After her son's death, Felix's mother, Lucy, appeared on ITV's Good Morning to talk about her experience. The videos of this interview are available to watch online.

Police statistics*

26% of the malicious communications offences we deal as a police alliance are cyber related

27% of these involve a victim aged under 18

82% of suspects in these cases are also aged under 18

* Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police alliance, April 2016 to August 2017

BullyingUK statistics*

79% of those asked had seen somebody bullied online

38% feel unsafe online

* From http://www.bullying.co.uk/anti-bullying-week/bullying-uk-national-survey-2014/

YoungMinds.org statistics*

59% of young people had their first social media accounts at age 12 or under (most site guidelines state users must be aged 13+)

45% spend 3 hours or more on social media daily

83% believe social media companies should do more to tackle cyberbullying

* From https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/policy/cyberbullying-inquiry/#what-the-survey-revealed.

Campaign week 16-20 October
What's happening

As we approach the half term holiday, which this gives parents/carers and teachers time to speak with the young people in their care about this important subject.

- Six national partners – the NSPCC, MumsNet, Bullying UK, Kooth, Kidscape, and Internet Matters – will be sharing our advice on their websites, and we'll be asking regional media outlets to help spread the word.
- Local authorities will host our advice sheets on their websites.
- Schools across our policing area will receive our advice sheets and be encouraged to access our online resources.
- Elizabeth Hurley, who is a local mother, will be lending her support for our campaign on social media – look out for her on Twitter.
- We'll be sharing a new interview with Lucy Alexander, mother of Felix Alexander, who tragically took his own life in 2016 after being bullied online.
- We'll be tweeting and posting on social media throughout.
- Look out for us on Facebook www.facebook.com/westmerciapolice and Twitter @WMerciaPolice.

Resources

We've emailed you:

- Cyberbullying and online harassment advice sheet for adults.
- Cyberbullying and online harassment advice sheet for young people.
- Content for your website homepages and related pages.
- A selection of images for your website and social media pages.
- A desktop background for you to use during the campaign week.

We will be sending you links to:

- New interview with Lucy Alexander.
- Animation about cyberbullying.

Please let us know if you need any further support or resources.

Key contacts

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