



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Challenging bullying

Rights, respect, equality: Guidance for parents and carers



Rights, respect, equality: guidance for parents and carers

Audience

Parents/carers, families, schools, governing bodies, local authorities and organisations who work with school children and young people to help with well-being and safeguarding issues.

Overview

This guidance forms part of a series of guidance documents providing information for all involved in preventing and challenging bullying in schools. Each document gives advice for a key audience. This guidance gives advice to parents/carers.

This guidance replaces: Respecting others: anti-bullying guidance (circulations 2003 and 2011).

Action required

This guidance should be brought to the attention of parents/carers and families of school children and young people.

Further information

Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

Supporting Achievement and Safeguarding Branch

Support for Learners Division

The Education Directorate

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

e-mail: CCD.SAS@gov.wales

 [@WG_Education](https://twitter.com/WG_Education)

 [Facebook/EducationWales](https://www.facebook.com/EducationWales)

Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at

gov.wales/anti-bullying-guidance

Related documents

Inclusion and pupil support (2016)

Keeping learners safe: The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002 (2015)

Thinking positively: Emotional health and well-being in schools and early years settings (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010)

School-based counselling operating toolkit (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011)

Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008: All Wales Travel Behaviour Code Statutory Guidance (2017)

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Glossary

For the purposes of this guidance, the following terms are defined.

Additional learning needs (ALN)

A learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty arises from a medical condition or otherwise), which calls for additional learning provision (section 2 of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.)

Bystander

A person who is present, whether online or offline, at an event or incident of bullying but 'does not take part'.

Children and young people

People under 18 years of age, in line with the definition of 'children' within the Children Act 1989.

Disability and disabled person

A person has a disability if (a) the person has a physical or mental impairment, and (b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A reference to a disabled person is a reference to a person who has a disability (section 6 of the Equality Act 2010).

Gender

A term that is often used to refer to whether someone's identity is female, male or non-binary (see gender identity). It can also be used more broadly to refer to the ways that social and cultural forces create differences and inequalities between women, men and non-binary people, including through social norms, gender roles and gender stereotypes.

Gender identity

A term that refers to a person's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (e.g. non-binary). People's gender identity does not always align with the sex they were assigned at birth (see transgender/trans).

Hate crime

A term that can be used to describe a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards a characteristic of the target, which could include the target's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the target for financial gain or some other criminal purpose.

Online bullying

A term that describes all bullying via technology, also known as cyberbullying.

Perpetrator

A term that refers to children and young people who exhibit bullying behaviour towards others.

Prejudice-related bullying

A term that refers to any form of bullying related to characteristics considered to be part of a person's identity or perceived identity group. Prejudice-related bullying includes the protected characteristics but can and does also extend beyond the protected characteristics and can lead to bullying for a variety of other reasons such as social status and background.

Protected characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

Race

Includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins (section 9 of the Equality Act 2010).

School

Means an educational institution which is outside the further education sector and the higher education sector and is an institution for providing

- primary education
- secondary education
- both primary and secondary education

whether or not the institution also provides part-time education suitable to the requirements of junior learners or further education.

Sex

Assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Some people's gender identity does not match up with the sex they were assigned at birth (see transgender/trans). Sometimes the term 'sex' and 'gender' are used interchangeably to refer to whether someone is female, male or non-binary.

Sexual orientation

A term that describes the sexual, romantic or emotional attraction of one person to another. People might use the terms heterosexual, gay, bisexual/ bi, lesbian or straight to describe their sexual orientation.

Targets

A term that refers to children and young people who are bullied.

Transgender/trans

An umbrella term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

Trolled

An internet slang word which relates to the deliberate act of making random and not asked for, often controversial comments. This is done via various internet forums with the intent to provoke an emotional reaction from unsuspecting readers to engage in a fight or argument.

Introduction

- 1.1 As a parent/carer you have a role to play in helping your child to learn to understand and cope with the positive and negative sides of friendships and socialising, both online and offline. You can help your child to learn to stay safe and happy and to treat others with respect and kindness. You are often the first to notice if your child is not acting like themselves, is unhappy or appears aggressive.
- 1.2 Parents/carers can feel a range of emotions when discovering that their child is being bullied or is bullying others. While initial feelings may include upset, anger, sadness and guilt, it is important to remember that there is a way forward.
- 1.3 We expect parents/carers and their children to work with local authorities and schools to prevent and challenge bullying.
- 1.4 The aim of this guidance is to give parents/carers a better understanding of bullying. It covers what is and what is not bullying, spotting the signs of bullying, action that can be taken to deal with bullying, rights and responsibilities of acceptable behaviour to help prevent bullying and where to find additional help and support when bullying happens.
- 1.5 This is part of a suite of guidance. The other documents in this series are aimed at governing bodies of maintained schools, local authorities, children and young people.
- 1.6 The suite of guidance is accompanied by an online toolkit providing resources to support implementation of the guidance at an operational level. The following symbol is used within this guidance to indicate that toolkit resources are available:



hwb.gov.wales/playlists/view/1e5b98ee-c74c-4b58-869a-048dff02f5f5/en/1



2

What is bullying?

Definition

- 2.1 There is no legal definition of bullying in Wales or indeed Great Britain. Therefore the definition used in this guidance builds upon widely used principles established in the United Kingdom since 1993.
- 2.2 For the purposes of this guidance, bullying is defined as:

Behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, which intentionally hurts others either physically or emotionally.

- 2.3 Bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour, but not all unacceptable behaviour is bullying. Bullying usually has three key elements, and can take place face-to-face or online.
- It is intentional or deliberate hurtful behaviour.
 - It is repeated behaviour that usually happens over a period of time.
 - The person or people being bullied feel powerless to defend themselves.

Types of bullying

- 2.4 Bullying can take many forms, including:
- being called nasty names, teased, made fun of, threatened or put down
 - being hit, kicked, punched, tripped up or knocked over
 - having belongings stolen or deliberately damaged
 - having rumours or gossip spread about you or people talking about you behind your back
 - being left out, excluded or isolated
 - being forced to do something you don't want to do or that you know is wrong.
- 2.5 Online bullying is bullying behaviour that is displayed through technology such as mobile/smart phones or the internet. This could include:
- hurtful, embarrassing or threatening material posted online (e.g. on social media)
 - nasty messages sent as text messages, e-mails or via other websites or apps
 - being excluded from an online game or chat forum
 - fake profiles on a social network to make fun of others
 - misuse of intimate explicit images of the person targeted (the target).

Prejudice-related bullying

- 2.6 Prejudice-related bullying is when the bullying is focused on what is different about a person's identity. It can be targeted at one person or a whole group of people because they are thought to be different, whether this is true or not. This is known as prejudice.
- 2.7 Prejudice-related bullying involves aspects of a person's identity such as:
- race
 - religion or beliefs
 - culture or family background
 - disability
 - gender identity – the way someone looks or acts
 - sexual orientation – whether someone is heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual (who someone is attracted to)
 - sex – because of someone's gender (often in a form of harassment).



When is it not bullying?

- 3.1 The following examples are examples of unacceptable behaviour but are not examples of bullying:
- a disagreement or 'falling out'
 - an argument or one-off fight
 - relationship issues where children or young people need to learn how to get along better
 - someone being 'nasty' with unkind or disrespectful words or action.
- 3.2 All unacceptable behaviour must be challenged, whether bullying or not. The Welsh Government expects schools to consider appropriate action for dealing with all unacceptable behaviour, whether bullying or not. If you feel the school is not doing this and addressing the situation you should raise your concerns with the school. Advice on how to raise your concerns with the school is explained further on in this guidance.



How to deal with bullying?

Tips for talking to your child about bullying



hwb.gov.wales/playlists/view/1e5b98ee-c74c-4b58-869a-048dff02f5f5/en/

- 4.1 If you are worried that your child is being bullied, asking them the following questions may help.
- How was school today?
 - What did you do at school today?
 - Who did you play/spend time with?
 - What did you play/do?
 - Did you enjoy it?
 - Would you have liked to have played/spent time with someone else?
 - Would you have liked to have played a different game/do a different activity?
 - What did you do at break-time/lunchtime?
 - Is there anyone you don't like at school? Why?
 - Are you looking forward to school tomorrow?
- 4.2 Ask questions that are relevant to your child. The type of questions and how you ask them will depend on the age of your child, their level of understanding and their mood.
- 4.3 Not all children and young people find it easy to talk about being bullied. If your child doesn't like talking about their feelings or they have communication difficulties you could:
- use toys, puppets or animals e.g. a family pet, to encourage your child to talk. Your child may feel more comfortable talking to something which can't react or talk back about what is happening
 - ask your child to draw a picture of how they feel or what they have been doing
 - use scales to rate how your child is feeling at different times during the day
 - use pictures of faces or emojis showing different expressions to explain feelings
 - use visual prompts like pictures in books or characters from films or television programmes to describe how they feel
 - use music to help your child tell you how they feel.

How to spot the signs that your child is being bullied

- 4.4 Your child may tell you directly that they are being bullied but if not, other signs to look out for, which might indicate they are being bullied include:
- coming home with damaged clothes or school bag
 - 'losing' belongings
 - coming home with cuts or bruises
 - reluctance to go to school or take part in group activities they previously showed interest in
 - difficulties sleeping
 - changes in behaviour – loss of appetite, bed wetting
 - noticeable changes in their mood – becoming withdrawn, depressed, angry, tearful, upset, anxious or unhappy
 - wanting to change their journey/route/time of travel to school
 - wanting to change school.
- 4.5 However, it is important to understand that there could be other reasons for these signs, so try not to jump to conclusions. Ask yourself:
- have there been other changes at school, such as moving school or class or a friend moving away?
 - have there been any changes at home, such as a new baby, divorce or separation, a new relationship or a death of a family member or pet?
 - could the change in behaviour or mood be related to puberty and general growing-up?
- 4.6 If there have not been any changes, you doubt puberty is the cause and you suspect bullying may be the reason for the distress, it is important to address the issue as early as you can.

What can you do to help your child if they are being bullied?

- Reassure your child it is not their fault. There is still a stigma attached to bullying and some children and young people feel they have brought it upon themselves. Remind them that many celebrities and famous people have been bullied too. Being bullied is not about being weak. Displaying bullying behaviour is not about being strong.
- Encourage your child to try and appear confident – even if they do not feel it. When people bully others, they usually want to get a reaction or to cause upset. If your child gives the impression they are not bothered, it usually becomes boring for the person doing the bullying and they are more likely to stop.

- It may help to encourage your child to look back at a situation and explore how it could have been handled differently to achieve a more positive outcome. This process is a good way of reflecting on what happened, the resulting feeling and the outcome. Exploring alternative choices of actions and feelings can help change the outcome of a similar scenario in the future.
- You may want to practice various scripts at home to help your child feel better prepared for managing challenging situations when they may face them. This may also help your child become more able to withstand and recover quickly from difficult situations – building their resilience.
- Teach your child to be assertive and practice saying 'No' as if they mean it. This will particularly help if someone is trying to force them to do something.
- Take time to understand the school's anti-bullying policy and who you could speak to about any worries you might have if bullying does occur or continues.
- Find out about lunch time clubs or groups that might interest your child, where they can be semi supervised and meet other children and young people if they find the playground or other less supervised spaces intimidating.

Building your child's confidence and self-esteem

4.7 To develop your child's confidence and self-esteem, you could:

- Focus on your child's strengths. Praise and encourage them for good things they do, especially when they are trying new things.
- Initiate friendships outside of school or with other relatives so your child has examples of positive friendships. Your child having opportunities to form positive relationships outside of school may help with relationships in school.
- Gaining skills and trying other activities, such as sport or art, can give a child or young person confidence. It could be anything from climbing a tree to a new digital skill.
- Help your child learn to share, think about what they can do for others, offer to help and be able to ask for help.
- Give them opportunities to learn to make decisions within the family, take responsibility and feel empowered.
- Teach your child that losing when playing any sort of game, sport or activity is not always bad. Not everyone can win every time.
- Reassure your child that not being good at something is part of life – it does not make them a failure. Explain that we cannot all be good at everything. Help them find out what they are good at. Help them discover that we all continue to learn, even as adults, and that this learning often comes from the mistakes we make.

What can be done to help your child if they are being bullied online?

- If your child has received an abusive or nasty online message they can block the sender, save the evidence and report it to the school. If the incident breaks the terms and conditions of the service on which it appeared, it can also be reported using the online reporting process of that service or application.
- Online bullying may lead to obsessive checking of a mobile/smart phone or tablet/computer at all hours. Limiting the amount of time your child can use their device can help to reduce the time they are exposed to online bullying.
- You should also be alert to any webcams your child may be using. The potential for a large audience can mean that online bullying is humiliating and isolating to an even greater extent than offline bullying. Most online bullying is carried out by people your child is likely to know, usually classmates. But it is possible that through gaming or other online chat forums, your child could be bullied or trolled by strangers.

4.8 Children and young people who are bullied may look for other people to be their friends and online they can talk to large numbers of people. Be alert if your child is unhappy as they may go online for advice, love, friendship and affirmation. While they may indeed obtain excellent advice and support for issues they are worried about, there is a risk that they are offered harmful advice or develop harmful relationships.

4.9 If your child is effected by or involved in online bullying, taking away their mobile/smart phones or access to online services such as social media may seem tempting, but it can lead to your child being withdrawn or feeling more isolated. Instead of removing technology from your child, you could:

- help them to learn how to be safe online and you could develop your own understanding of this
- set up appropriate filters on devices they use
- limit the amount of time your child can use or access their phones or online services
- remind your child they can block users, save evidence and report content to online service providers and/or the school
- encourage your child to show support if a friend is bullied, making sure they do not like, share, comment on or forward any cruel or bullying messages or images.

Coping with the effects of bullying

- 4.10** No parent/carer likes to think that their child is involved in or effected by bullying, but in reality more than half of all children and young people are involved in or effected by bullying – either as the one doing the bullying, the one being bullied or as a witness or bystander. Bearing this in mind, there is a good chance you will have to deal with bullying at some point.
- 4.11** It might help if you talk about how sometimes bullying happens and ask your child if they have seen any of this behaviour. Make it clear that you are always there to help if ever your child needs you. It may not be that day, but your child will know you are there if they ever want to talk about it.
- 4.12** Try not to be ‘too busy to listen’ or appear to have so much on your plate that your child holds back from telling you something for fear of burdening you further. Some children and young people are very aware of their parents’/carers’ stress and in response may bottle up their own worries because they believe they should ‘stand on their own two feet’.
- 4.13** Make it clear that your child can always come to you to talk things through and that together you will work out what to do. If your child talks about an incident, try not to show your distress at what you have heard. Stay calm. Children and young people can feel it is their fault that their parents/carers have become so distressed. Try to listen to your child without getting angry or upset. Try to put your own feelings aside, sit down and actively listen to what your child is telling you.
- Once your child has finished telling you what has happened, repeat back to them what you have heard. This will show your child that you have understood what they have said and allow them to correct any bits if needed.
 - Ask your child how they want you to take this forward. This will help your child feel included in decisions, take ownership of dealing with the issue and feel empowered.
- 4.14** It is natural to feel angry, guilty, anxious and upset but showing your child these negative emotions will not help their situation or put them at ease. There are things you can do to help you to manage your response:
- concentrate on breathing – slow down and take longer breaths
 - respond do not react – count to ten before saying what is on your mind if you are not feeling calm.

Your feelings and actions

4.15 Many parents/carers feel a range of emotions when they find out that their child is being bullied. It is important that you try to remain calm and that you do not react in a way that could escalate the issue. Try to keep in mind that there is a way forward and that there are positive steps you can take to help your child:

- talk about how you are feeling, perhaps to your family or friends
- remember you are not alone and it can be resolved – stay positive
- think about a time when you have previously got angry or anxious when dealing with a situation and whether it helped. If it didn't, think about what positive actions you took or could have taken to help to deal with the situation differently
- get support and advice to help you deal with the situation from local support groups and anti-bullying organisations (examples of these are provided in the annex of this guidance).



What is expected from your child's school?

Legal obligations

- 5.1 Schools have a duty of care to protect all their learners and provide a safe, healthy environment.
- 5.2 Equality Act 2010 places obligations on schools to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not, and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not.
- 5.3 Education Act 2002 places a legal duty on maintained schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- 5.4 Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires the headteacher of a maintained school to determine measures to encourage good behaviour and respect for others and prevent all forms of bullying amongst learners.
- 5.5 Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 requires the headteacher of a maintained school to comply with the travel behaviour code made by the Welsh Ministers.

Complaints procedures

- 5.6 All schools must, by law have a school behaviour policy. We expect schools to also have an anti-bullying policy setting out how they will address bullying in their school. Your child's school's anti-bullying policy or its school behaviour policy, should set out the stages for you to report a bullying concern. These policies should be available on their website or you can request a copy directly from the school.
- 5.7 You will need to refer to your child's school's policy for specific details of their reporting stages but below are the general stages which you will need to complete in writing. You should complete all steps in order; allowing the school suitable time and opportunity to put in place action to remedy the situation and giving the action time to take effect. It may not be possible to completely resolve the situation immediately, but you should feel confident that timely action is being taken; if not, move to the next stage in the process.

Step 1 – report to the class teacher/form teacher/head of year

Step 2 – report to the headteacher

Step 3 – report to the school governing body

Step 4 – report to the local authority

- 5.8 At every step, keep a diary or event log of all contact you have made and received, making a note of:
- who you spoke to
 - how you contacted them (e.g. by phone, email, face to face etc.)
 - when (date/time)
 - what actions were agreed and who was responsible for these actions.
- 5.9 Please note: You should not take to social media to complain about the school or insult, offend or threaten individual school staff. It may cause more harm but it will not resolve the issue. Remember, schools have a duty of care to their own staff as well as to your child. In severe cases, legal or other action may be taken by the school against you if you endanger staff.
- 5.10 You should also not take matters into your own hands and attempt to tackle other children or young people involved in the incident or their families, be this in person or via social media or other online platforms.



Could your child be bullying others?

- 6.1 It can be hard for parents/carers to accept that their child is bullying others but it is a common human behaviour.
- 6.2 There could be several reasons why your child is bullying others and they could include the following.
- Humans naturally tend to group together, seeking out familiarity, and are drawn to the strongest or most popular, often abandoning or turning on those who are deemed weaker or different. This is why it is so important to teach your child from a young age about the importance of respect, diversity, tolerance, acceptance and kindness.
 - If your child is being bullied, they may also be bullying someone else because they are copying behaviour or releasing their frustrations. Your child may have found that bullying others is a way of avoiding being bullied themselves.
 - Your child may show bullying behaviours because of a need or difficulty they have, e.g. a behavioural difficulty.
 - Your child may show bullying behaviours because they have a high pain threshold and so they do not realise how roughly or aggressively they are 'playing'.
- 6.3 If your child misbehaves, reacts badly or displays bullying behaviour, the school may use sanctions in response. These sanctions should be explained in the school's anti bullying and/or behaviour policy. If your child has an additional learning need, the plan setting out the educational support they will receive (e.g. their individual development plan, statement or individual education plan) may set out how the school manages their behaviour, the school should take this into account when responding to their negative behaviour.

How to deal with your child's bullying behaviour

- 6.4 Bullying is a highly emotive term, often causing negative feelings such as anger, anxiety, fear, disgust and shame to both the children/young people involved and their families. Nobody wants to hear that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, but if this does happen it is very important to focus any disapproval or reaction at the behaviour and not the child. Bullying someone is wrong and the bad behaviour needs to stop but the bad behaviour does not make the child a bad person.
- 6.5 Calling a child a 'bully' is labelling them rather than their behaviour. Doing this suggests that being a bully is the only thing they are, rather than reflecting their unacceptable behaviour. The issue is not with the child but with the way they have behaved. Labelling the child and shaming them as a person is likely to result in them becoming defensive and not wanting to engage or acknowledge their actions are wrong. It is more effective to help them to understand that their behaviour is unacceptable and explain the impact it is having on others. Working with them and helping them to understand what they have done and think of ways to make things right is more likely to stop the bullying from continuing.



Appendix

Bullying

Bullies Out – e-mentors offer online support, email mentorsonline@bulliesout.com. Anti-bullying charity based in Wales works with individuals, schools, colleges and youth and community settings www.bulliesout.com

Anti-Bullying Alliance – Information for schools, parents/carers and children and young people on all aspects of bullying.
www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Kidscape – Anti-bullying charity who deliver training and workshops for children and young people who have been bullied. www.kidscape.org.uk

The Diana Award – young ambassadors trained to help others.
www.antibullyingpro.com/

Helplines and support services

General

Samaritans – www.samaritans.org – 116 123 free to call.
Welsh Language Line: 0808 164 0123 free to call (please see website for line opening hours), e-mail, live chat and other services available

Rethink – www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/support-groups/ 0300 500 0927
Advice and information for people with mental health issues

Mencap Cymru – wales.mencap.org.uk/cy Helpline Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm
0808 8000 300

Meic – www.meiccymru.org/cym – Information advice and advocacy for children and young people

Childline – www.childline.org.uk Tel: 0800 1111

Kooth – www.kooth.com – Counselling service

CALL – www.callhelpline.org.uk/DefaultW.asp? – C.A.L.L. Community Advice and Listening Line

Parents/carers

Family Lives – Family lives: Parents'/carers' forums confidential helpline – 0808 800 2222

ParentZone – Support and advice for parents/carers www.parentzone.org.uk

YoungMinds – www.youngminds.org.uk Young people's mental health.
Parents' helpline – 0808 802 5544

Advice and support networks

General

Internet Watch Foundation – www.iwf.org.uk Report illegal images of children

Victim Support – Report hate crime in Wales
www.reportheate.victimsupport.org.uk/cy/cartref/

CEOP – www.ceop.police.uk If child sexual abuse or exploitation is suspected

NSPCC – www.nspcc.org.uk If you think a child is in immediate danger, don't delay – call the police on 999, or call us on 0808 800 5000

Mental Health Matters Wales – www.mhmbcb.com/

Parents/carers

Internet Matters – Advice on online issues for parents/carers and children and young people. www.internetmatters.org.uk

Children and young people

Heads Above The Waves – Support for children and young people suffering depression or self-harming.
<http://hatw.co.uk/straight-up-advice/>

Other

School Beat – All Wales School Liaison Core Programme.
www.schoolbeat.org/en/parents/know-the-programme/national-events/what-is-the-all-wales-school-liaison-core-programme/

Children in Wales – A national umbrella body for organisations and individuals from the voluntary, statutory and professional sectors who work with children, young people and their families in Wales, helping to ensure they have a voice.
www.childreninwales.org.uk/our-work/bullying/

Children's Commissioner for Wales – Speaks up for children and young people in Wales on important issues, supporting them to find out about their rights under the UNCRC. Holds public bodies to account on their responsibilities to children and young people.
www.childcomwales.org.uk/

Time to Change Wales – www.timetochangewales.org.uk/en/mental-health-stigma/young-people/wecanwewill/ #WeCanWeWill campaign for young people, which aims to change attitudes towards mental health, ending stigma and discrimination

Online issues

Childnet International – All aspects of online safety www.childnet.com