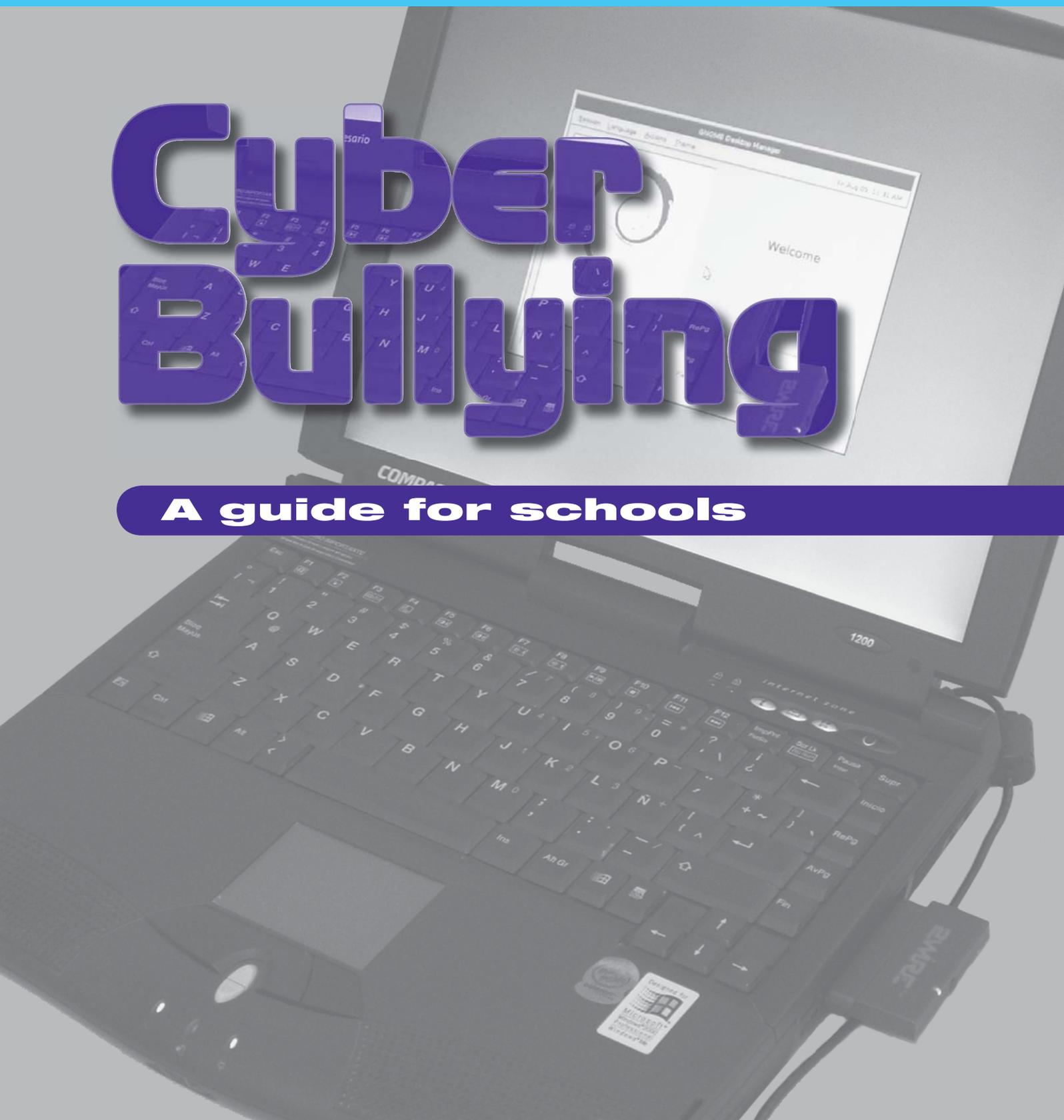


East Sussex County Council

Cyber Bullying

A grayscale background image of a laptop. The keyboard is visible in the foreground, and the screen shows a 'Welcome' message. The text 'Cyber Bullying' is overlaid in large, purple, 3D-style letters.

A guide for schools

Introduction

Mobile phones and computers have become essential everyday items that allow us to keep in touch with our friends, families and colleagues, as well as providing us with unlimited access to information via the Internet. However, East Sussex County Council recognise that as new technologies have developed and evolved so too has the nature of bullying, with mobile phones and computers becoming the new weapon of choice for those who bully.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with East Sussex's Anti-Bullying Strategy – Working Together to Combat Bullying (available at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/bullying). More importantly, strategies to combat cyber bullying will only be successfully if children and young people are actively involved in finding solutions to the problem. Participation Guidance on how schools can effectively engage children and young people on issues of bullying will be sent to all schools in November 2005.

What is Cyber bullying?

There are several ways that children and young people can bully each another using new technologies. They can send **e-mails** or **text messages** containing insults or threats directly to a person. They may also spread hateful comments about a person to others through e-mail, or postings on **Websites** and **online diaries** (blogs).

Context

We know that children and young people are increasingly reporting being bullied through their mobile phone via text messages or on-line via threatening e-mails. According to a recent survey undertaken by the children's organisation NCH¹:

20%

11 to 19 year olds admitted they had been bullied or threatened via their mobile phone or computer.

14%

of young people said they had received bullying or threatening text messages.

73%

of those surveyed said they knew the person who was bullying or threatening them.

28%

did not tell anyone they were being bullied. Of those who did tell someone (41%) told a friend, (24%) a parent and 14% a teacher.



¹ NCH the Children's Charity (2005) Putting U in the picture: Mobile bullying survey 2005.

What the law says

Making anonymous or abusive phone calls, sending a malicious or threatening text message or e-mail is a criminal offence under:

The Protection from Harassment Act (1997), which has both civil and criminal provisions

The Malicious Communications Act 1988

Section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984



What do schools need to know?

Schools can play a vital role in ensuring that students stay safe from bullying on-line and when using mobile phones. Schools should develop policies and good practice for dealing with cases of cyber bullying in the same way that they would deal with any other case of bullying.

Effective education and awareness of these issues, for children and young people and staff alike, can also help to reduce the risks and provide an open culture where bullying of this nature can be freely reported and discussed.



Mobile phones

It is estimated that 97% of 12-16 year olds now own a mobile phone (Mobile Youth 2005) and an increasing number of children and young people are reporting being bullied via their mobile phone.

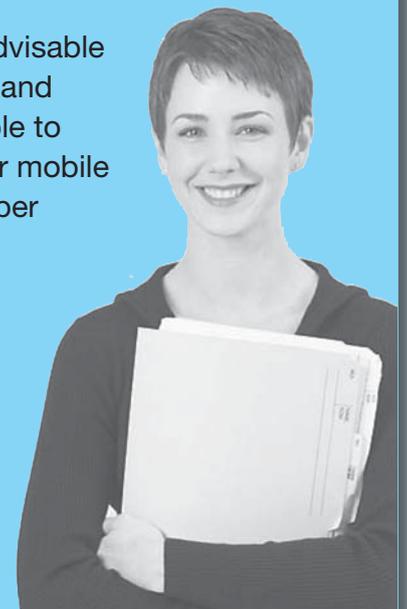
Mobile phones are personal, private, and always accessible, with many children and young people keeping their mobile phones on at all times. This means that those who bully can harass their victims at school and even in their own homes.

A new phenomena called **'Happy Slap TV'**, has seen groups of three to four young people slapping/punching people around the face, whilst one of their friends records the incident on their mobile phone. The resulting 'Happy Slap TV' video clip is then swapped amongst friends in the playground.

Increasingly, schools are limiting the use of mobile phones during school hours and in certain circumstances have banned the use of mobile phones completely by students whilst on the school premises.

Protecting children and young people

- Advise children and young people to only give their mobile phone number out to friends and people that they trust
- Children and young people should not respond to an abusive message. If space permits, the messages should be stored. These can then be used as evidence at a later date
- Encourage children and young people to tell a teacher, parent/carer or friend if they receive unwelcome text messages and/or phone calls
- It may be possible to trace malicious text messages and/or phone calls (even if the number is withheld) by reporting such incidents to your mobile phone company, who can then take steps to trace them
- In certain instances it may be necessary to involve the police
- It may be advisable for children and young people to change their mobile phone number



E-mails

Like bullying by text message, e-mail provides a reasonably 'anonymous' method for those who bully. Young people in schools have been known to steal passwords and send out threatening e-mails or instant messages using an assumed identity. Computer literate young people may build whole Websites, often with password protection, to target specific students or teachers.

Schools are encouraged to develop an **'acceptable use policy'** that detail the ways in which ICT facilities can and cannot be used in school. This should cover:

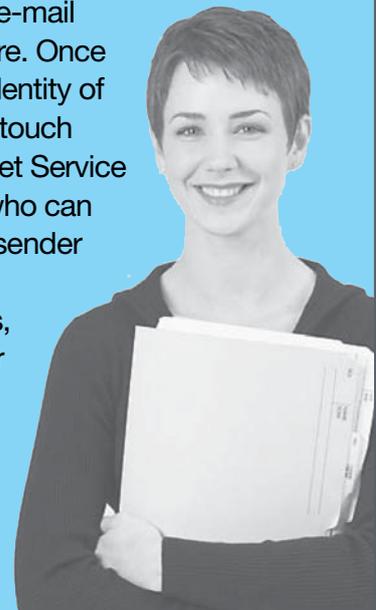
- Appropriate use of e-mail
- Appropriate use of the Internet
- A statement regarding bullying by e-mail
- Actions for reporting misuse, including receipt of mail from unknown senders
- Sanctions for misuse of e-mail

The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) have published a resource for schools entitled **'E-safety'** - on developing a whole school approach to internet safety that can be downloaded from:

www.becta.org.uk/corporate/publications/publications_detail.cfm?currentbrand=all&pubid=232&cart=

Protecting children and young people

- Children and young people should exercise caution over who they give their e-mail address to
- Children and young people should be advised not to respond to malicious or threatening messages, even though they may really want to, this is exactly what cyber-bullies want. Tell a teacher, parents/carer or friend
- Advise children and young people not to delete malicious or threatening e-mails, but to keep them as evidence of bullying
- If the e-mail is being sent from a personal e-mail account, this should be reported to the sender's e-mail service provider. Many e-mail programmes also provide facilities to block e-mail from certain senders
- If the bullying e-mails continue, and the e-mail address of the sender is not obvious, it is possible to track the address using 'e-mail tracking software. Once you know the identity of the bully, get in touch with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) who can then block the sender
- In certain cases, it may be easier to change your e-mail address



Chat rooms

Aside from the general risks of using chat rooms and instant messaging (IM) services, these are also being used by children and young people to bully and intimidate others. Chat rooms have an element of anonymity that can lead to bullying. Groups are often formed in chat rooms just as they would be in school, and can be used as a way of excluding or harassing others.



Protecting children and young people

- Children should be encouraged to always use moderated chat rooms and to never give out personal information whilst chatting
- If bullying does occur, they should not respond to the messages, but should leave the chat room and seek advice from a teacher, parent/carer or friend
- If using a moderated chat room, when bullying takes place the system moderators should also be informed, giving them as much detail as possible, so that they can take appropriate action



Remember a few Golden Rules



- Advise children and young people that they should not give out personal information too freely



- Encourage children and young people to tell staff/parents/friends of anything that upsets them



- Keep a record of all bullying incidents either by saving or printing e-mails



- If an e-mail or text message is particularly disturbing or breaks the law, contact the police



- Check on your school's anti-bullying policy and see whether it addresses bullying using computers and mobile phones. If not, it should be updated

Useful sites:

www.stoptextbully.com

www.cyberbullying.ca

www.becta.org.uk

www.kidscape.org.uk/childrenteens/cyberbullying.shtml

Useful Contacts

Connexions provide young people 13-25 with support, information, advice and guidance via Personal Advisers.
Tel: 01273 783648

Copes offers support and guidance to children 5-13.
Tel: 01273 407336 or 07745 409304

Crowborough Clued-Up Info is a drop-in information centre for young people 11-25.
Tel: 01892 661990

Eastbourne Open Doors provides friendly drop-in information services to 13-25.
Tel: 01323 725155

Relateen provides young people 10-18 confidential counselling services.
Tel: 01323 410001

Youth Development Service
Eastern area Tel: 01424 430485
Western area Tel: 01273 479793

Childline offers free confidential help with bullying.
Tel: 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC provides a national 24hr helpline.
Tel: 0808 800 5000 or visit www.nspcc.org.uk

Samaritans offer 24hr confidential advice and support. Tel: 01273 772277 or visit jo@samaritans.org

Kidscape provide advice on dealing with bullying. Tel: 08451 205204 or visit www.kidscape.org.uk



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