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VIRTUAL VIOLENCE:  
Protecting Children  
from  
Cyberbullying

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“Human nature is not of itself vicious”

Thomas Paine,  
The Rights of Man (Vol II), 1791

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London 2009

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“I don’t know how to say it.  
It was like she’d hit someone,  
but in a different way.”

(Girl, 15, on witnessing cyberbullying)

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## Foreword to Virtual Violence report

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by Prof. Tanya Byron

Two years ago, I conducted an independent review looking at the risks to children from exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the internet. It became clear that new technologies have become integral to the lives of young people, and as such, there is a need to educate ourselves about the benefits and dangers they bring.

Children and young people have long been highlighting how cyberbullying is one of the main challenges they have to face within the digital world. This report explores in detail some of the risks and behaviours displayed by young people online, and provides an insight into the fears and dangers experienced by young people when using the internet and their mobile phones. Interestingly, it examines the nature and effects of persistent cyberbullying, and highlights the issue as a peer-to-peer problem amongst young people. The findings are a timely reminder of some of the issues that we need to address, and offer interesting recommendations to help make the digital world safer.

Everyone has a role to play in empowering children to stay safe while they enjoy these new technologies, just as it is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe in the non-digital world. Government, industry, parents, schools, the public and third sectors – we all have an important part to play, and we must work together to achieve our goals. But this isn't just about a top-down approach, children and young people need to be empowered to keep themselves safe. It also doesn't mean we close down our children's digital opportunities in order to eliminate risk. Instead, we need to listen to, empower and support our young people to understand and manage risks, and make the digital world safer.

However, we must acknowledge that we cannot make the internet completely safe. Because of this, we must also build children's resilience to the material to which they may be exposed, help build their confidence and skills to manage situations such as cyberbullying, and empower them to support each other. CyberMentors is responding directly to these needs, training children and young people in online support, facilitation and risk management skills as well as providing adult support as and when the severity of bullying makes that necessary. It represents exactly how we should work alongside children and young people when it comes to tackling online bullying.

## Executive Summary

The latest figures from Beatbullying reveal that nearly one-in-three 11-16 year olds has been deliberately targeted, threatened or humiliated by an individual or group through the use of mobile phones or the internet. For a quarter of these the experience was ongoing, meaning that 1-in-13 children were persistently cyber bullied.

What we mean by persistent cyberbullying is bullying that is happening day in, day out, over a period of months or sometimes years. It is continuous cyberbullying by the same person or group. As expected, children who were persistently cyber bullied experienced a longer duration of bullying. Around a third of those persistently bullied said it lasted a year or more, or else was still going on. Another fifth said it had lasted months.

The consequences of cyberbullying are no less traumatic than those that follow face-to-face bullying. The media has picked up on a number of high profile cases in which children have committed suicide following relentless online hate campaigns waged on Bebo and Facebook. These are only the most

extreme manifestations. Academic research is beginning to document the increased isolation, poor educational attainment and self-destructive behaviour that readily follow cyberbullying. Cyberspace has also made possible new forms of social interaction and bullying. One worrying aspect relates to 'sexting', in which children produce and circulate sexual content amongst themselves. A third of children have received an unwanted or nasty message and a

*Given that there are approximately 4,424,000 children aged 11-16 in the UK, this figure can be extrapolated to suggest that over 340,000 children have experienced insidious bullying inflicted via digital technology.*

quarter received an unwanted or "nasty" image on the subject of sex. While a small proportion of these 'sexts' were from an unknown source or were spam, the vast majority were identified as a peer of the young person. In certain cases, these sexts have acted as a catalyst for mass bullying and even statutory rape.

Our survey of over 2,000 secondary school pupils shows that cyberbullying is of increased concern for certain 'high risk' groups of children.

- Pupils with Special Educational Needs, (have a learning difficulty or disability) are 16% more likely to be persistently cyber bullied over a prolonged period of time.
- Pupils receiving free school meals, (an agreed universal indicator of increased deprivation, limited/ing social mobility, poverty and educational under-achievement) are 13% more likely to be persistently cyber bullied over a prolonged period of time.
- White non-British ethnic background all reported a higher incident of this intense form of cyberbullying.

Critically, in terms of resourcing intervention and targeting behaviour change campaigns, girls experienced twice as much persistent cyberbullying as boys and some 48% of all young people admitted to having undertaken some sort of cyberbullying.

In terms of the specific websites on which cyberbullying has been taking place, the MSN instant messenger service and the Bebo social networking site were the worst offenders. This was the case for both children who had been bullied and for children who had witnessed others being bullied. The video-sharing site YouTube was also identified as a common place where footage of bullying was proliferated.

Cyberbullying is a growing malaise that has evaded systematic treatment. In keeping our children safe online, too much focus has been placed on protecting them from adults and adult-derived content when child-on-child violence is the most common threat in cyberspace. Likewise, while there are a number of programmes being run to tackle 'offline' bullying in schools, there is a paucity of services to prevent online bullying. Beatbullying is leading the way in addressing this shortfall.

Our latest programme **CyberMentors is a traditional school-based peer mentoring system delivered via a social networking site mechanism.** The result is a peer-to-peer website in which young people experiencing bullying, online or offline, can be assisted by people their own age. By allowing children to talk to someone who understands what they are going through, CyberMentors reduces the stigma of speaking out about bullying and

empowers young people to put an end to bullying in all its forms.

We also propose a set of workable policy reforms to effectively engage with the hundreds of thousands of cases of damaging but non-criminal acts of cyberbullying.

These include:



*Only by educating children in an engaging manner and in their peer groups can they properly recognise their role in bullying and its negative impacts.*

- 1. Better interface design and clearer reporting mechanisms** on interactive websites popular with children. There should also be greater transparency of the moderation and sanctions protocol enforced by these providers. Active and transparent referral for the victims of cyberbullying to evidence-based support and assistance portals, such as CyberMentors, CEOP and ChildLine On Line should be standard across the industry.
- 2. Safety nets for those young people targeted in cyberspace.** These resources could take the shape of counsellor services, textual and audio-visual advice sites or peer-to-peer online support networks. The crucial thing is that they are appropriate for children well-versed in using digital technology and accessible to those likely to feel isolated from their peers and responsible adults.
- 3. Adequate resourcing of innovative anti-bullying programmes.** Only by educating children in an engaging manner and in their peer groups can they properly recognise their role in bullying and its negative impacts. Early and decisive interventions are needed to redirect the social power held by children toward more constructive ends.
- 4. Targeted work aimed at groups of vulnerable young people.** Vulnerable groups of young people (see opposite) are more likely to be affected by cyberbullying. More research is needed in this area, followed by targeted intervention work with the identified groups to support those affected and redirect behaviours.

**5. Shared responsibility for reducing the occurrence and effects of cyberbullying and harmful online behaviour and content.**

This extends to families, and there is a need to put in place a range of policies and initiatives to increase the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence of adults, and parents in particular, to help them educate young people to stay safe using new technologies.

A note on vulnerable groups:

We acknowledge that there are broadly defined vulnerable groups, which are accepted and used across many children’s services. Defining groups that are vulnerable to cyberbullying and sexual exploitation is not a concept or definition that has been widely researched or agreed.

With this in mind, for the purposes of this report and as one of the UKCISS Vulnerable Groups Champions, Beatbullying agreed the following working definitions with partners NSPCC, CEOP and ChildNet International; consequently when we refer to vulnerable groups we define as follows:

- 1. Children who experience family difficulties and are brought up in “chaotic” family/home environments** – they may suffer physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse and neglect, witness domestic violence and/or family breakdown, be brought up in an environment in which drugs and alcohol abuse of the adults around them impinges on the quality of parenting they receive and they may be children who, having been judged to have suffered “significant harm”, are placed in the LA Care System.
- 2. Children with disabilities** – they may suffer from chronic physical ill health, have physical, learning disabilities or special educational needs. There is an argument that some children with disabilities, classified as vulnerable offline, (those who are deaf, or physically disabled), are not as vulnerable online as the internet can act as a leveller. However, for some of these young people, if the disability is visible/identifiable when a young person is online (or known to other users), then the person becomes more vulnerable. In addition, if a disability affects a person’s use of new technology, then this can also increase vulnerability.

3. **Children with emotional/behavioural difficulties** – these children maybe bullied offline and are then more likely to be vulnerable online, or children who may present with differing symptoms such as a propensity to self harm, to be prone to suicide attempts, to have a diagnosed mental or behavioural condition. In certain areas such as these, new technology can increase risks and magnify harm to vulnerable young people.
  
4. **Children who experience “exclusion of access”** – these children experience “system neglect” in the sense that they are unable to access services that are universally available to other children. They belong to the more marginalised groups within society such as travellers, asylum seekers, trafficked and migrant communities. Notwithstanding the simplistic view that some young people are not vulnerable online if they are never online, it is accepted that young people with limited access to the internet and/or with limited experience are vulnerable (they are not confident online, not aware of aspects of new technology, and have a limited understanding of dangers). Exclusion to access new technology, due to language, disability or social economic status, increases vulnerability. It is broadly agreed that as a young person’s access and usage increases, they become less vulnerable. However, there is argument that the more a young person uses the internet, the more vulnerable he/she becomes. There will come a point when a young person becomes so confident, he/she becomes vulnerable due to complacency, or due to overestimated estimation of their safety.

Many of these groups are vulnerable online (young carers, young people with special educational needs and looked after children, for example), yet there are other factors which can affect a young person’s vulnerability specifically in the online environment. Vulnerable children and young people are not a self-contained or static group. Any child/young person may be vulnerable at some time depending on any one, or a combination of, the risks or challenging life events they face and their resilience. This applies both online and offline.

One of the factors that affect vulnerability online is accessibility. Notwithstanding the simplistic view that some young people are not vulnerable online if they are never online, it is accepted that young people with limited access to the internet and/or with limited experience are vulnerable (they are not confident online, not aware of aspects of new technology, and have a limited understanding of dangers). Exclusion to access new technology,

due to language, disability or social economic status, increases vulnerability. It is broadly agreed that as a young person's access and usage increases, they become less vulnerable. However, there is argument that the more a young person uses the internet, the more vulnerable he/she becomes. There will come a point when a young person becomes so confident, he/she becomes vulnerable due to complacency, or due to overestimated estimation of their safety. Environmental factors, such as a lack of filtering software or a lack of adequate supervision, will also affect vulnerability online.

Specifically in terms of vulnerability, there is a strong argument that the internet can act as a leveller for children and young people with disabilities, and those young people who are classified as vulnerable offline, for example who are deaf, or physically disabled, are less vulnerable online. However, if the disability is **visible/identifiable** when a young person is online, or is known to other users, then the person becomes vulnerable. In addition, if a disability **affects a person's use of new technology**, then this also increases vulnerability. For example, young people with learning difficulties can be classified as vulnerable as this affects their use of the internet.

Finally, young people with emotional, mental or behavioural problems can also be vulnerable online. This would cover those being bullied offline, who we know are vulnerable online (bullying migration), as well as those at risk of self harm or suicide.

# Introduction

Millions of young people across the UK have successfully integrated digital technology such as the internet and mobile phones into their everyday lives. The benefits of this are manifold. The freedom that social networking sites (SNS), instant messenger, chat room and mobile technology affords to young people allows them to express themselves and socialise in new and fun ways. The wealth of information available through websites and file sharing allows young people to learn in a similarly novel manner. At its best, the internet is a democratising, rewarding and illuminating experience for our young people; an experience that they are embracing with curiosity, vigour and expertise.

At its worst, however, the internet and mobile phone can channel grotesque imagery and behaviours. Unfettered access to cyberspace makes possible new forms of abuse and indecency in which children can be exposed as unsuspecting targets. In this world, parents, communities and governments have a duty to protect young people from these encounters. Put simply, the anonymous, accessible and decentralised nature of the internet and mobile phone are at once their benefit and their drawback in facilitating child well-being and development.

Digital technology is socially neutral: a tool for interaction rather than an inevitable weapon of abuse. As such, mobile phones and the internet can be utilised in different ways, depending on the intention and caution of the user. What is necessary is to safeguard children from the more insidious behaviour that can manifest itself via this technology whilst still allowing them to explore its capacity and harness its benefits.

The most high profile concern regarding digital technology and child safety remains paedophilia. In response to this, organisations such as the UK's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) have led the way in successfully tackling online grooming. Their record is second to none in building an online environment safe from this form of exploitation.

Yet a growing body of evidence is emerging that identifies peer-to-peer bullying as an increasing component of our young people's daily experience in cyberspace. Research published by Harvard University into child safety and digital technology states that bullying and harassment are the most frequent threats that young people face online. Indeed, it also argues that where sexual solicitation does take place, the majority is actually committed by other young people (Palfrey et al. 2008: 4). As the authors of the EU Kids Online report

have noted, policy must begin to ‘move beyond the division between child victims and adult perpetrators’ (Livingstone and Haddon 2009: 2).

This is not to imply that online grooming should not be a priority area for government. On the contrary, in stark child protection terms stemming paedophilia must take precedence. What we maintain, though, is that child protection threats are not an either/or

matter. When it comes to the safety of young people, we must respond to all dangers in a proportionate manner and research shows that cyberbullying is a real and growing risk in this respect. Consequently, the UK government needs to escalate bullying as a significant danger to young people and reform policy concerning the use of digital technology accordingly.

Some steps to this effect have already been taken. Kevin Brennan, former Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families, has called cyberbullying ‘the unacceptable face of new technology [which requires] concerted action across society to address it’ (DCSF 2007b: 8). Partly to provide this action, the United Kingdom Council for Child and Internet Safety (UKCCIS), a stakeholder group designed to deliver the recommendations of the Byron Review, has since set up key working groups and Teachernet to help teachers manage the challenges posed by new technology (see Byron 2008). To give Head Teachers the power to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off-site, meanwhile, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides a defence in relation to the confiscation of mobile phones and other items (DCSF 2007a: 3). Furthermore, the internet safety charity ChildNet International and the DCSF have together produced a range of resources to help parents, carers and youth workers promote ‘safe surfing’ among children. Finally, the ‘Think U Know’ and ‘Kid Smart’ websites, provided by CEOP and ChildNet, respectively, offer guidance, advice and signposting to children around cyberbullying.

These attempts to tackle the problem remain incomplete. In part, this is due to the failure of service providers to improve monitoring procedures and implement effective mechanisms at the point of attack. But it is also due to limited awareness, education and coping mechanisms among *young people themselves*.



*A growing body of evidence is emerging that identifies peer-to-peer bullying as an increasing component of our young people’s daily experience in cyberspace*

While the legal system has sent clear messages to young people that criminal acts of bullying will not be tolerated – the sentencing in August 2009 of Keeley Houghton for posting death threats on Facebook attests to that – it is not good social policy to wait until bullying reaches such acute levels before we intervene. For every bully who is punished before the court, many more will succeed in tormenting their target if we fail to engage sufficiently with the problem at a grass roots level. If we are to effectively reduce the incidents and impact of cyberbullying, we need to better engage with young people, both in and out of school, and utilise their own agency to assail online bullying.

Bullying is a malaise that affects us all. Practically everyone has had some experience of it, whether at school or at work, as the victim, a witness or even as a bully. It is especially widespread amongst young people. Our research repeatedly indicates that 1-in-3 children and young people experience bullying and for 1-in-10 of these, this takes the form of severe physical, psychological and emotional child-on-child violence. This is replicated in other major studies. An Ofsted survey of more than 110,000 children and young people aged 10-15 found that 30% said they had been bullied in the last month while a quarter said they worried about it (Ofsted 2007).

Bullying is not merely ‘a fact of life’ and nor should it ever be considered so. It ruins lives and leaves young people feeling isolated, worthless and even suicidal. When bullying goes unchecked in our schools and communities, the breeding ground for gang culture, crime and violence prospers. A study of youth crime for the Home Office, for example, found that a third of the 12-16-year olds indicted for criminal offences had been bullied at school in the previous year (Flood-Page et al. 2000). At the same time, the potential of young lives is wasted as melancholy, anxiety and apathy set in. Academic studies such as Ybarra et al. (2006) have reported that children involved in bullying are more likely to use substances and exhibit symptoms of serious depression than those children who avoid bullying.

Acknowledgement of these consequences is reflected in the growing number of support services for young people experiencing ‘offline’ bullying. At present, though, not enough exists to support them in the online environment. CyberMentors is the latest project by Beatbullying designed to meet this need. CyberMentors.org.uk is a new service for the digital age: a traditional mentoring system delivered via a social networking site. Young people, aged 11-25, are trained as CyberMentors, in schools and online, so that they can offer support to their peers. Underpinned by cutting-edge technology, it is a safe and appealing website where young people can turn to other young people

for help and advice about bullying. CyberMentors are also supported by trained counsellors, available online if needed. In the first six months, over 179,000 users visited the site and over 110,000 individual messages were sent between registered users and our ever-expanding mentoring team.

By allowing children to talk to someone who understands what they are going through, and in an environment with which they are familiar and which also provides a level of distance, CyberMentors reduces the stigma of speaking out about bullying and empowers young people to put an end to bullying in all its forms. This report seeks to further these goals. In highlighting the migration of traditional bullying into cyberspace, the new forms of abuse made possible through digital technology, and the lives lost to persistent cyberbullying, we reaffirm our conviction that cyberbullying is a child protection issue. Only by responding to this danger and implementing the recommendations of this report can we ensure that digital Britain becomes a safer Britain.

## Methodology

In 2006, an online poll by Beatbullying recorded that nearly half of young people had seen or heard of some sort of text, video or online bullying. To explore this phenomenon in more depth, a survey was commissioned to question young people about their experience and understanding of cyberbullying. The questions themselves were drawn up in consultation with young people and Beatbullying's development officers, who have extensive experience in visiting schools and talking to children about bullying. A mixture of closed and open questions was posed: closed questions were used to aggregate answers for statistical purposes, while open questions were posed to allow respondents to best express their feelings or direct us to the issues most pertinent to them. In some cases of closed questions, respondents were offered the choice of adding in other answers not listed by us in the survey. This was the case, for example, with the question about what sorts of websites had been used for bullying. This helped guard against leading the respondent into giving a particular answer.

The survey itself was completed by 2,094 secondary school pupils from November 2008 to February 2009. These pupils were based in 20 mixed comprehensives across the following areas: Cambridge, Essex, Inner London, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and South Yorkshire. The questionnaire was administered to a whole form class, thereby ensuring that a representative selection of children for that school was captured.

The sample surveyed by Beatbullying generally corresponded to total population demographics. The majority of the respondents (78%) were White in ethnicity, with other main ethnicity types also represented: 7% were Asian, 6.5% Black, 5% Mixed and 0.5% Chinese. Likewise, 4% of respondents said they had a statement of Special Educational Needs and 12% said they received free school meals.

When filling in the questionnaire, respondents were given a covering letter that detailed why we were asking them for this information and what would be done with it. A brief introduction to online bullying was provided, including a definition of cyberbullying, to ensure that all respondents were aware of what we were asking them to talk about (see next section). The questionnaire took around 20 minutes to complete and was filled out in a private and quiet environment. Completed questionnaires were mailed to Beatbullying's headquarters and postal charges fully compensated.

A number of questions were asked about whether the respondent had received any online messages or texts on the topic of sex. These questions were phrased in such a way as to avoid gratuitous or graphic descriptions of the content of these messages and instead focus on how the message was sent and by whom. To further reduce the potential harm of engaging in this type of research - and also to ensure honest answers – respondents were assured that all answers would be treated with confidentiality and that they would retain anonymity in the written report accompanying the survey. In addition, as the survey was completed on paper, respondents could skip questions they did not feel comfortable answering.

## Defining Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is understood by the DCSF to be ‘the use of Information and Communications Technology, particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else’ (DCSF 2007a: 03). Expanding on this definition, we would argue that ‘upsetting’ someone can take a variety of forms. It can involve threatening, distressing or humiliating a target, and, as such, encompasses a wide range of behaviours. We also believe that it is crucial to focus on child-on-child bullying, to which the vast majority of cyberbullying pertains.<sup>1</sup> If an adult is involved, either as a perpetrator or a victim, then the pattern of bullying will be of a different nature – possibly amounting to harassment or stalking – and so a distinct approach will be needed to resolve the issue.

Despite relative consensus on the conceptual definition of cyberbullying, identifying instances of this in practice are much more difficult, not least for young people themselves. Many children do not consider certain acts such as saying hurtful things or passing on images to constitute bullying because they happened in cyberspace rather than face-to-face. This is compounded by the impersonal nature of online communication. Although emoticons can be used to clarify intention, users do not have the benefit of the sometimes very subtle cues (tone of voice, posture, expression, etc) that people pick up on when talking in person. This can create an intention gap: what is perceived as a joke or idle remark by the perpetrator may be taken extremely seriously by the target. As the Byron Review (2008: 5) concluded, ‘people act differently on the internet and can alter their moral code, in particular because of the lack of gatekeepers and the absence in some cases of visual cues... This is potentially more complex for children and young people, who are still trying to establish the social rules of the offline world.’

*Many children do not consider certain acts such as saying hurtful things or passing on images to constitute bullying because they happened in cyberspace rather than face-to-face*

As a result of this naivety measures of cyberbullying often fall short,

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1. The DCSF (2007a) has drawn attention to the phenomenon of cyberbullying by pupils of school staff.

essentially because there is insufficient awareness of this phenomenon as something worth reporting. This is borne out by the fact that the National Bullying Survey of 2006, then the largest investigation ever undertaken into bullying in the UK, found that only 7% of school children had been bullied via digital technology (Daily Telegraph 2006). More recent and specific research on cyberbullying, meanwhile, has returned much higher findings. The EU Kids Online study found that 18% of teenagers had been cyber bullied, research conducted for the Anti-Bullying Alliance reported that 22% of 11-16 year olds had been cyber bullied, and the DCSF reckoned that up to 34% of 12–15 year olds had been cyber bullied (Livingstone and Haddon 2009; Smith et al. 2008; DCSF 2007a).

The challenge, then, is to encourage both young people and adults to recognise attempts to ‘threaten, distress or humiliate’ using digital technology as cyberbullying without going as far as to re-define all instances of negative online interaction as child-on-child violence. To help achieve this, a typology of cyberbullying is beginning to emerge that points out the various ways in which these acts can take place (Erwin-Jones 2008; Hinduja and Patchin 2009). They include:

- Sending threatening or discomfoting text messages to a mobile phone
- Making silent, hoax or abusive calls to a mobile phone
- Making and sharing embarrassing images or videos via a mobile or website
- Broadcasting unsuitable webcam footage that is threatening or manipulative
- Leaving hurtful messages on a social networking site or sending the same message to that person’s peer group
- ‘Outing’ people by publishing or disseminating confidential information online
- Stealing an online identity in order to cause trouble in that person’s name
- Deliberately excluding people from online games or groups
- Setting up hate sites or hate groups against an individual
- Sending menacing or upsetting responses in chat rooms, online game or messenger ‘real time’ conversations
- Voting for someone in an insulting online poll
- Sending someone ‘sexts’ that try to pressurise them into sexual acts.

When pursued purposefully, cyberbullying can be a particularly insidious form of aggression. The most obvious reason is that unlike traditional bullying it is not limited by time or space. Phone calls, text messages, video clips and

comments on websites follow the target anywhere, violating their private space and free time. This makes it difficult for children to follow the usual advice of ‘walking away’ from a bullying situation as well as making it far more intrusive.

A related problem is that cyberbullying can rapidly draw in a larger audience than is possible in ‘offline’ bullying. When things are shared across mobile phones or posted online, it becomes difficult to control who might see it or have copies of it. This is a particularly significant way in which cyberbullying is different from other forms of bullying: a single incident can be experienced as multiple attacks, having repercussive consequences that make it difficult for the victim to gain assurance that the experience is over. This is especially the case when the bullying is linked to content – as in online videos – which can exacerbate, extend and prolong the experience (DCSF 2007a: 5-15).

Added to the omnipresence of cyberbullying is the paradoxical nature of cyberspace as a domain which offers both public interaction and perceived anonymity. This creates greater opportunity for young people to engage with their peers, often doing things they would not do in person and attempting to do so under the cover of a username. Thus, while anything posted online or sent from a mobile is traceable with the right technology and expertise, the victim of such bullying may never know the exact identity of the aggressor, aware only that is one of their peer group. This can make those people being cyber bullied uneasy, distrustful, and suspicious of their relationships, reducing their capacity to put an end to the problem (DCSF 2007a: 16).

Despite the dangers of cyberbullying, young people enjoy digital technology and are keen to continue interacting in cyberspace. An Ofcom survey reported that 84% of 12-15 year olds now access the internet outside of school and did so on average 14 hours per week (Ofcom 2009b: 60-62). This can create additional difficulties in reaching those being bullied and preventing it from happening further. In one survey, 31% of respondents who had been cyber bullied and not told an adult about their experience said they did so because they were afraid of having their internet access restricted (Juvonen and Gross 2008).

Another set of problems relates to the technological generation gap. While young people have proved adept at integrating digital technology into their lifestyles and skill sets, older generations have generally done so more slowly or reluctantly. This can undermine the power of trustworthy adults to intervene in acts of bullying. Recent research from Australia indicated that 83% of parents would not know what to do if their child were cyber bullied and that ‘a significant proportion of teachers [did] not use or understand interactive online

technologies' (Weitenberg 2009). Likewise, as Juvonen and Gross (2008) have reported, when an adult was told about a situation of cyberbullying, only 19% of children reported an improvement in the situation. Finally, as cyberbullying often happens outside school and away from communal spaces in the family home, oversight of young people's usage of digital technology is distinctly limited. In short, exclusive reliance on adults to safeguard young people is a flawed solution as many are 'unaware or unable to mediate their children's online activities' (Livingstone and Haddon 2009: 2).

In sum, cyberspace widens the opportunity for a greater extensity and intensity of bullying and can create worlds in which victims of child-on-child violence may also be harder to reach. Cyberbullying is not an inevitable product of young people using digital technology but when it does occur, it can be just as targeted, sustained and damaging, if not more so, as 'offline' bullying.

## Thematic Findings

### 1. Who are the Victims of Cyberbullying? Vulnerable Groups and Offline Targets

Our survey revealed that 30% of 11-16 year olds have experienced some form of cyberbullying. This figure follows those findings highlighted previously, which reported that 18-34% of young people had experienced cyberbullying (Livingstone and Haddon 2009; Smith et al. 2008; DCSF 2007a).

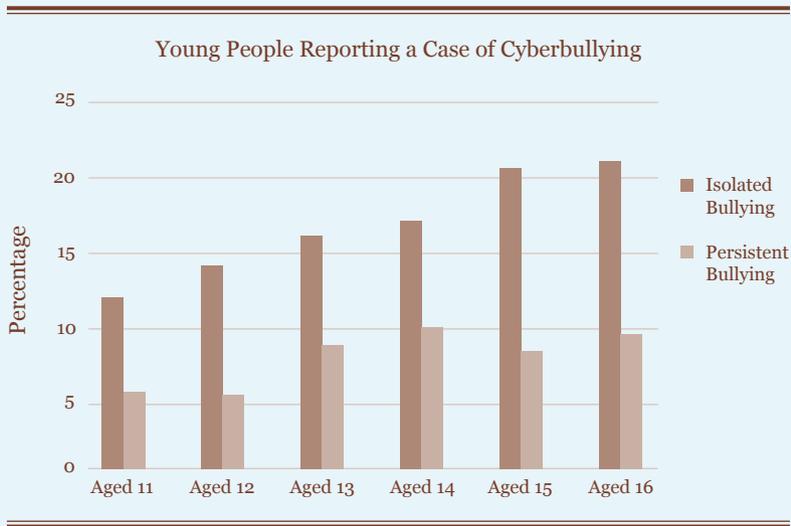
The variations in results can be attributed to two factors. First, the location and timing of the study can draw out differences in the culture and ubiquity of digital technology among children. Particularly with cyberbullying, which, as Noret and Roberts have shown, increased year on year over the course of their five-year study, recent studies are more likely to report a higher prevalence of online bullying (Noret and Roberts 2009). Second, as described above, differences in the definition of cyberbullying can influence the outcome. For instance, studies that exclude nuisance calls or messages tend to find a lower prevalence of online bullying (Palfrey et al. 2008: 17).

We focus in this report less on the extensity of cyberbullying and more on its intensity. In our survey one quarter of those 30% who have encountered cyberbullying said the experience was not isolated but ongoing. In other words, 1-in-13 children had been persistently cyber bullied. Given that there are approximately 4,424,000 children aged 11-16 in the UK, this figure can be extrapolated to suggest that over 340,000 children have experienced insidious bullying inflicted via digital technology (ONS 2009).

*As illustrated by the graph opposite, persistent cyberbullying is a concern for children as young as 11. Coping with these attacks can be especially daunting for younger children. As one 11-year old girl noted of her experience:*

*“ I felt like she [the cyber bully] was controlling my life. She made up things about me ”*

Another aspect revealed by the graph is that the amount of persistent cyberbullying tends to follow the amount of isolated cyberbullying. This would suggest that while isolated, mild and unintended cases of cyberbullying may not be worrying in themselves, they are a cause for concern to the extent that they pave the way for persistent, severe and insidious cases.



Within these overall figures, certain groups could be identified as more at risk than others. Girls were twice as likely as boys to experience persistent cyberbullying, with 9% of our survey sample saying they had been a victim of ongoing bullying. This supports the general finding within the academic literature that girls are more likely to be victims of online harassment (see Agatston et al. 2007; DeHue et al. 2008; Smith et al. 2008; Rivers and Noret 2009).

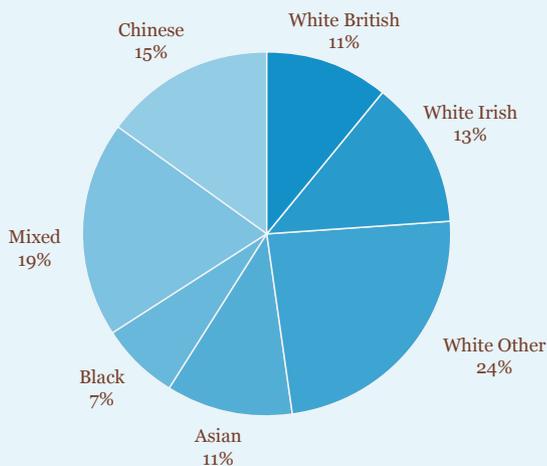
We also noted that the incidence of persistent bullying was more prevalent among traditionally ‘vulnerable’ groups of children. While the overall incidents of cyberbullying differed little for children who had a Statement of Special Education Needs or received free school meals, when it came down to persistent cyberbullying in particular, 16% and 13% of these respective groups had experienced this more intense form of bullying, compared to just 9% of ‘non-vulnerable’ children.

A similar risk factor is attached to children of certain ethnicities, especially White non-British. As the pie chart below indicates, nearly a quarter of young people in the 'White Other' category – which includes Gypsy-Roma, Traveller of Irish Heritage, European and East European – were persistently cyber bullied compared to 11% of those in the 'White British' category. Young people who described themselves as 'Mixed' or 'Chinese' were also more likely to be persistently cyber bullied. These findings suggest that nationality is as important as race in determining the risk of being cyber bullied, as White non-British children would tend to be recent immigrants and are likely to be targeted because of this 'foreigner' status.

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Young People Persistently Cyberbullied by Ethnicity



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Regarding the type of incidents reported, our survey indicated that hoax calls to mobile phones (18% of respondents recorded this happening to them) were the most common form of cyberbullying. This was followed by hurtful text messages or emails (13%) and hurtful comments left on social networking profiles (8%). Smaller numbers also reported people humiliating them by editing or changing pictures of them (6%), someone using their password or

identity to create a false profile (3%) or someone posting an offensive video clip of them online (1%).

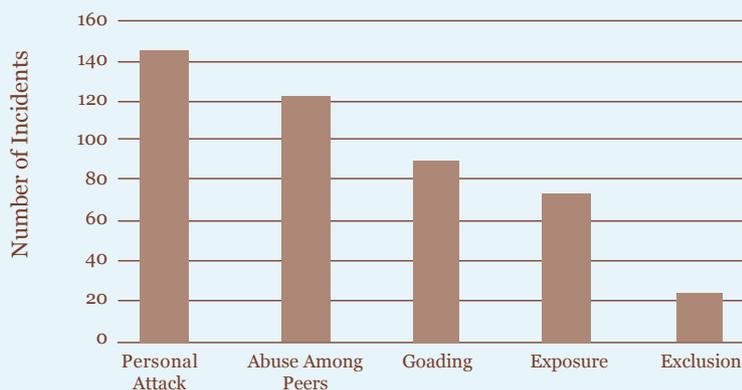
When it comes to cyberbullying, however, in most instances children will be victimised with multiple technologies and multiple torments. The average number of incidents recorded by children who had been cyber bullied was 2.3, indicating that even for those who experienced an isolated period of bullying, more than one method would often be employed to bully them. A comment made by one 15-year old girl summed up the multifaceted cyberbullying experience well:

*“ It was a comment left on one of my youtube videos that said ‘U r a c\*nt’. I got some hurtful emails from a girl on myspace, calling me immature, a bitch and a whore. A girl on MSN threatened to beat me up and kept calling my mobile. ”*

This range in the methods of cyberbullying is alluded to by the chart below (see Appendix for chart data). Focusing on those 158 children in our survey who said they had been persistently cyber bullied, the chart illustrates the different psychological challenges that young people confront. The different combinations of threatening, teasing and humiliating behaviour that coalesce in cyberbullying undoubtedly make this more of an overwhelming situation for children to try and assail.

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Experiences of those 158 Young People Being Persistently Bullied



In terms of the specific websites on which cyberbullying has been taking place, the MSN Messenger service and Bebo social networking site were the most common. As the chart opposite indicates, this was the case for both children who had been bullied and for children who had witnessed others being bullied. The large number of respondents saying that they had experienced bullying via a website is arguably a reflection of internet popularity, especially of interactive websites, among British children. According to Ofcom (2008), the regulator of the UK communications industry, half of 8-17 year olds now have a profile on a social networking site. The fact that bullying varies between these sites, meanwhile, reflects the different purpose, audience and regulation of those specific services.

MSN, identified by 18% of respondents as a medium by which they had been bullied, is an instant messenger service with a large amount of traffic. The opportunity thus presented by MSN for impulsive and reactive 'live chat' by a sizeable number of young people goes some way to explaining this result. A 16-year old girl gave this account, emphasising the collective possibility of online bullying:

*“ As MSN allows several people into a conversation, everybody joined the conversation and had a go at one girl as she left hurtful messages posing as someone else on a friend’s site. Everybody knew her as she was in our year at school, they both were. ”*

Likewise Bebo, through which 10% of respondents surveyed had been bullied, is a social networking site that offers excellent functionality and is also exceptionally popular with teenagers. Those children that had been persistently bullied through Bebo tended to be younger, with an average age of 13, and most commonly complained of people leaving hurtful comments, editing their photos or publishing private information about them. The ease with which content can be added to Bebo undoubtedly facilitates this. For example, one 12-year old girl said she was cyber bullied because:

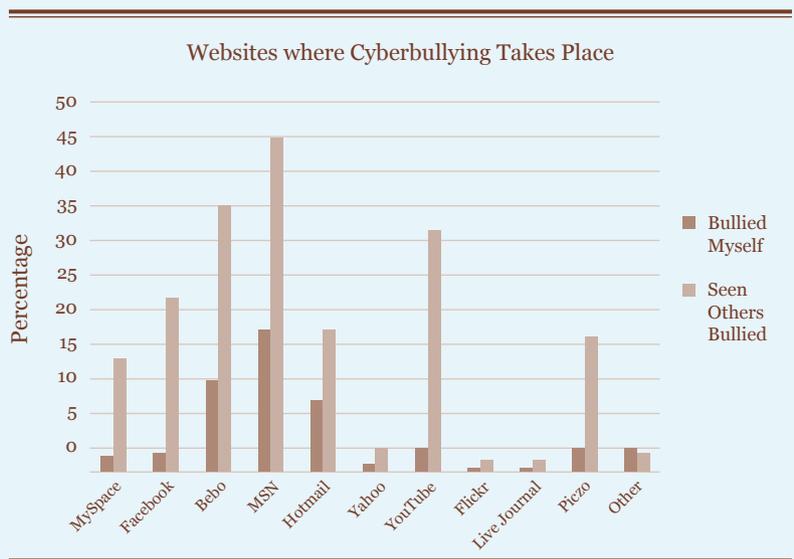
*“ They said they could see me when I get changed in the same room and he/she was taking pictures of me and putting them on Bebo and they even sent rude txts. ”*

The video-sharing website YouTube is a different case again. The site makes it possible for anyone with an internet connection to upload a video that millions

of people could watch within a few minutes. This design is reflected in the fact that while just 5% of people had been bullied on YouTube, seven times this amount had seen this happening to others. While the site does notify users of their legal obligations when uploading content and can remove clips flagged as inappropriate by a viewer, the terms of service have to be broken to remove postings and, in any case, the damage has often been done by the time administrators get round to purging the clip. As a 12-year old boy highlighted as well, it is not only videos that cause offence but the comments left below them:

*“ On Youtube my friend put on a video of a Tupac song and he [the bully] said 2 Pac got shot. It should have been you! ”*

A final example of an interactive website is Flickr, a photo-sharing network with strict access controls. All photographs uploaded onto this site are viewed by a member of staff before being accepted and ranked according to potential offensiveness. Those deemed inappropriate are set to ‘restricted’ and can only be viewed by users with an adult profile. Just 0.1% of respondents had been bullied via this website, although this might also reflect its popularity and use by respondents.



The concluding finding in this section relates to the source of cyberbullying. The majority (62%) of those children being persistently cyber bullied said they experienced this as an extension of offline bullying. Just under a quarter (22%) said they first experienced the bullying via a mobile phone or the internet. Furthermore, over three quarters of these children also knew who had sent them the message/image, suggesting that the perpetrator was from their school or local area.

These findings lends weight to the ‘migration theory’ of cyberbullying, which states that bullying tends to originate in traditional settings and then follow the victim online. This is supported in existing academic literature by Hinduja and Patchin (2009), which noted within their sample group just 16% of those experiencing cyberbullying had been targeted exclusively online. Despite the potential of cyberspace for turning traditional predictors of power on their heads, most research finds a strong correlation between real world and online victimisation. As Palfrey et al. (2008: 7) concluded, minors who are most at risk in the offline world continue to be most at risk online.

Another characteristic of those children persistently cyber bullied is that they use the internet more frequently. Of the 1251 children who said they have never been bullied online or via a mobile phone, 64% used the internet daily and 29% used it weekly. Of the 158 children who said they had experienced ongoing cyberbullying, meanwhile, 78% said they used the internet daily while 19% used it weekly.

Taken together, the evidence presented in this section corroborates the research by Juvonen and Gross (2008) which found the strongest predictors of cyberbullying victimization to be the incidents of being targeted in the ‘real’ world and the amount of time spent online. We would support this conclusion, arguing that to a significant degree the cyber-life and ‘real’ life for young people has been merged, and that the two arenas are not separate spheres of interaction with different social hierarchies but continuations of the power asymmetries formed in traditional settings.

In sum, while the case for greater intervention into cyberbullying can wane when it is mainly one-off incidents under consideration, when emphasis is placed on the tens of thousands of young people who are subjected to systematic taunts and abuse, the need to tackle this problem begins to become clearer. As we have outlined, this persistent cyberbullying is predominantly peer-to-peer and, once it migrates from school into cyberspace, tends to be recurrent. Persistent cyberbullying may take different forms to offline bullying but, as we shall see in the following sections, it has similar roots and all too similar consequences.

## ‘Sexting’ and Sexual Bullying

Access to adult pornography is not the only way children in the UK can be exposed to inappropriate sexual content online. Sexting – sending messages or images with sexual content via mobile phones or the internet – is a widening avenue by which cheap, gratuitous, and often unsolicited, sexual material is reaching young people. What is more, it is children themselves recording and circulating the images.

Beatbullying has been at the forefront of unearthing this modern phenomenon in the UK. We put out our first report in August 2009, based on preliminary findings of the cyberbullying survey now discussed in more depth. This report revealed that a third of children have received a message and a quarter received an image on the subject of sex. While a small proportion of these ‘sexts’ were from an unknown source or were spam, the vast majority (85%) were identified as sent by someone the recipient knew. These senders were largely from the opposite sex. This parallels findings from the US, where most young people identify their online sexual solicitors as other adolescents (Wolak et al. 2006).

These sexts are often implicated into patterns of bullying, with photos being circulated beyond its intended recipient to classmates, friends and even strangers. As The Guardian reported, one 14-year old girl sent an explicit photo to her then boyfriend because ‘he said he loved me and if I cared about him, I’d do it... After I sent him that picture, he ignored me and put [it] up on Bebo and Facebook saying I was easy’ (Barbieri 2009).

Further findings from our survey indicate that large swathes of young people are also having online conversations about sex. Around a third of both boys and girls have been online and had someone start talking about sex with them. Two thirds of respondents (66% for boys 68% for girls) knew who this person was, and, again, they were predominantly from the opposite sex. In terms of the relationship held to these people, the majority were identified as friends or ex-friends, or else as a ‘love interest’. Sexual content from adults or someone they didn’t know was low in comparison.

These conversations can also be implicated into patterns of bullying. As one 14-year old girl commented on her online chat experience:

*“ The boy asked me if I was ready to have sex with him and I said no and then he got angry and said ‘You can suck my dick!’ ”*

In more extreme cases, the sexual solicitations between young people can lead to offline encounters and statutory rape. In May 2009, for example, a group of teenagers were sentenced to six years in jail for the rape of an under-18 year old in Essex. The three defendants first met the girl two years prior to the crime, when they began chatting to her on Bebo and Facebook (Daily Mail 2009).

We acknowledge that young people explore boundaries around the issue of sex, but when behaviour or content becomes gratuitous, it can be unwelcome and inappropriate. The use of technology has facilitated this exchange, which, as illustrated above, can make a young person feel very uncomfortable and potentially lead to harassment. Sexual bullying, as it exists offline in schools and relationships, can also occur online.

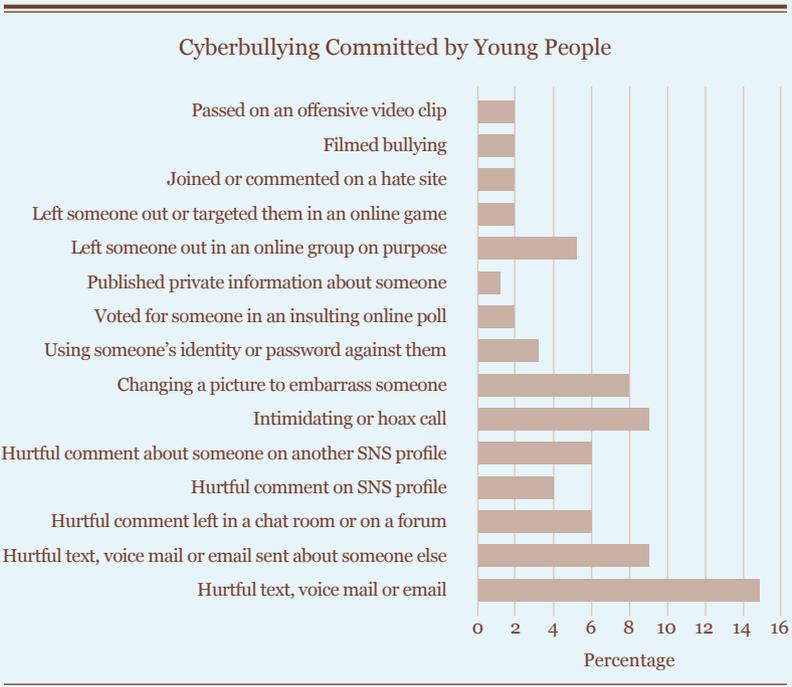
Beatbullying is committed to furthering our understanding of this problem and is partnering with a university in order to produce a second sexting report to be delivered in 2010.

## 2.

### Who are the Cyber Bullies? Reactionaries, Passengers and Opportunists

Our survey indicated that 33% of young people have committed some form of cyberbullying against their peers. As with the finding on the victims of cyberbullying, this figure on the perpetrators is broadly in line with existing academic reports. For instance, two particularly authoritative studies put the figure at 26% and 33%, respectively (Beran and Li 2007; Hinduja and Patchin 2008).

The most common acts of cyberbullying included sending hurtful text messages, voice mails or emails either directly to the target (15% of respondents saying they had done this) or to other people about the target (9%). Making intimidating or hoax calls and changing, uploading pictures and leaving hurtful comments on social networking profiles were also widespread. The chart below illustrates these in more detail.



There was little difference in the amount of cyberbullying according to gender. In other words, girls were just as likely as boys to commit some form of cyberbullying. This stands in contrast to other pieces of research, which have produced somewhat contradictory findings. For instance, while Qing Li (2006) found that males were twice as likely to cyberbully as females, Keith and Martin (2005) found that this particular type of aggression was more common among girls.

Given the detailed nature of our particular questionnaire – which broke down cyberbullying into specific acts – we are able to shed a little light on this debate. What our survey revealed is that while the broad phenomenon of cyberbullying is equally prevalent among both sexes, different acts are more or less common amongst each.

For example, we found that girls sent more hurtful texts, voice mails or emails than boys (17% of female respondents compared to 11% of male respondents), especially when it came to sending these about the intended victim to other people (11% to 5%). Boys, meanwhile, sent more threatening or hoax phone calls (10% of male respondents compared to 9% of female respondents), were more likely to commit identity theft (4% to 3%) and were four times as likely to film bullying (4% to 1%).

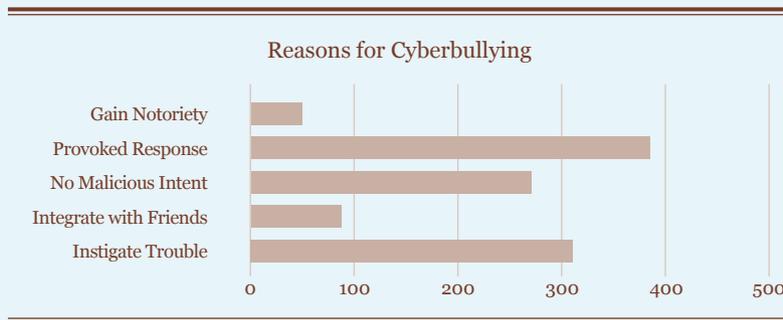
Another interesting finding pertains to the role that children play as bullies. While our headline figures suggest that a third of children are victims of cyberbullying and a third are perpetrators, further investigation shows that, in actual fact, a significant number of children have experienced both sides of the divide.

As illustrated in the box below, when we bring together the acts experienced or committed by respondents, we find that most children (53%) were absent from the ‘perpetrator’ and ‘victim’ sides of cyberbullying – i.e. they had no experience of cyberbullying. This is noteworthy in itself, as it suggests that nearly half of all those surveyed had encountered cyberbullying in one form or another. But more significant than that was the result that 16% of respondents had both displayed hurtful behaviour and experienced that same behaviour via digital technology. In other words, over half of the people who admitted to cyberbullying had also been cyber bullied themselves. This is consistent with the academic finding reported by Nansel et al. (2001), which placed 15% of school pupils in the ‘bully-victim’ category.

In turn, smaller proportions conformed to the traditional stereotypes of ‘the bully’ and ‘the bullied’ as just 17% were either entirely on the giving end and 14% on the receiving end of cyberbullying.

		Young Person's Experience		
		Been Cyber Bullied	Not Been Cyber Bullied	Total
Young Person's Actions	Cyber Bullied Others	329 (16%)	368 (17%)	697 (33%)
	Not Cyber Bullied Others	302 (14%)	1095 (53%)	1397 (67%)
	Total	631 (30%)	1463 (70%)	2094 (100%)

A wide variety of reasons were given by respondents as to why they had engaged in bullying behaviour. The most common was that there was no serious, malicious intent behind it. Of the 697 young people who had done at least one thing that could be construed as cyberbullying, 40% said they did it as a joke. Other popular reasons were that they were provoked and so did it for revenge or to get someone back (35%) or that they were just angry about stuff in general and so instigated trouble as a form of release (25%). Despite the fact that many children had been bullied themselves, only 6% gave this as a reason for them bullying others. As before, these results have been grouped into different categories in the chart below to make for clearer analysis (see Appendix for data).



Combining these two sets of findings – that half the cyber bullies have been bullied themselves and that most acts are rationalised as jokes or as a response to some provocation – we can conclude that cyberbullying in general is not confined to a hardcore of bullies committing premeditated and malicious acts. Rather, a lot of bullying appears to happen reflexively or unintentionally. This is what we refer to as ‘reactive’ cyberbullying; a type of bullying that is facilitated by digital technology in as far as the freedom of cyberspace removes the normal constraints regulating social interactions (Hinduja and Patchin 2009: 90). This conclusion chimes with academic findings which reckoned that 37% of respondents said things via instant messenger services that they would not say in person (Bauman 2007: 5).

The ad hoc nature of much cyberbullying is illustrated in the quotes below, which respondents gave when asked why they committed an act that could be construed as cyberbullying:

*“ I did it just once, just because I wanted the person to feel just the same as I did, but I know that it wasn’t right and I wish I didn’t do it. ” (Girl, 12)*

*“ Only because my friends understand and it happens to all of our group so no-one is singled out. ” (Boy, 16)*

*“ Someone done something to annoy and hurt me, so me and another friend slagged them off. ” (Girl, 15)*

This highlights why our findings about the widespread nature of bullying should be treated with some caution. The acts that we defined as bullying in the survey are not always understood by children as such, meaning that ‘cyberbullying’ actually incorporates a lot of social interaction that was not intended to be and/or was not interpreted as acts of bullying. As Hinduja and Patchin (2009) have noted in their surveys, when children were asked to list the things they had done online, 33% of them fell into the category of cyber bully, but when they were asked to say whether they had actually cyber bullied someone, just 8% agreed. The IPPR’s qualitative research into youth activity online captures the current culture of cyberbullying well when they note that ‘young people do not tend to use the term ‘cyberbullying’ and there are strong norms toward ‘seeing the joke’ where online behaviour is concerned’ (Kay and Sheldon 2008).

Nevertheless, while not everything which could be hurtful to the recipient contains an element of gratuitous cruelty that marks out elements of bullying in the physical world, because digital technology allows a large number of people to post, view and comment on content without much effort, these jokes can quickly snowball into more pernicious and insidious forms of bullying. This process encompasses what we term the ‘opportunists’ and ‘passengers’ of cyberbullying: the former minority take advantage of the novel opportunities afforded by digital technology to wield power over others, while the latter majority simply ‘go along for the ride’.

For example, while just 2% of respondents had filmed bullying taking place and 1% published private information about someone, nearly two thirds of the respondents (61%) had seen or heard of fake profiles, hate sites or ‘happy slapping’ happening among their peer group and 40% knew someone personally who had been bullied over the web or mobile phone. The comment below by a 15-year old girl neatly sums up how traditional bullying can be encouraged and proliferated through digital technology:

*“ It was a group of boys making two boys kiss and [they] videoed it and sent it to everyone. ”*

The potential for gratuitous or abusive images to go ‘viral’ and reach large numbers of the victim’s peers is perhaps unsurprising given the ubiquity of digital technology. In our survey, 97% of 11-16 year olds said they had a mobile phone and 61% of these said they used it for photos or sending picture messages, a phenomenon now made cheaper by the use of Bluetooth technology. This heightened awareness among British children is a growing characteristic of the contemporary youth experience online: in our survey one-in-five said they had heard or seen cyberbullying in the last month alone.

As mentioned previously, this is happening even among the youngest members of our school population. Eighteen per cent of 11-year olds said they had been sent a video clip or photo of someone being bullied. Illustrating the destructive ends to which the embrace of digital technology can be put, one 11-year old girl told us of the racist abuse her friend, of mixed Asian ethnicity, encountered:

*“ She was sent a picture of her with dark skin, dark eyes and weird everything. My friend was very upset. ”*

While a lot of debate around online child safety has focused on the anonymity afforded by digital technology, in the case of cyberbullying, this is only exploited in the minority of premeditated cases that do not depend on exploiting offline power imbalances. As we have shown above, most cyberbullying is in fact reactive and/or rooted in traditional bullying. In this respect, the most pernicious effect of online anonymity is that it allows people to view and pass on abusive material without responsibility.

As embarrassing or hurtful incidents take place in cyberspace, scaling up among peers and rebounding back into real world relationships, the consequences can gain in intensity. The DCSF campaign entitled 'Laugh at it and you're part of it' attests to the danger posed by the silent majority of 'passenger' cyber bullies. Ultimately, then, the reason young people cyber bully is due to a lack of awareness about their own role as a bully and a similar shortfall in their understanding of its consequences.

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## Bullied Girl got Message to ‘Hurry Up and Die’

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Eighteen-year-old Claire was a victim of persistent verbal and physical bullying at school, but even at home she couldn't escape her tormentors, as they continued their assault over the internet.

At the peak of her torture, when she was 15, Claire received a series of vicious messages and online postings via her MySpace profile. One of the most vitriolic read ‘I just want you to know what a fat, evil, sadistic cow you are. I want to see you suffer as slow and painful a death as possible.’ The bully's message of insults and threats ran to over a page.

Claire's ordeal started with a simple argument after a basketball game. One girl continued to bully her, and the problem escalated from name-calling to physical assaults. However, the incidents were not limited to the confines of the school, and the bullying continued outside of school.

When Claire began receiving anonymous insults and threats via MySpace, she became withdrawn, angry and upset and she contacted one of Beatbullying's Directors. Each time Claire received an abusive message online, she would contact Beatbullying with a copy of the message, and we were able to offer support and advice.

Over a significant period of time, BB staff persuaded Claire to tell her learning mentor. Ultimately, with the support of her learning mentor and Beatbullying, Claire was able to overcome her experiences. The learning mentor had an idea of who the perpetrator might be, and the messages stopped.

Claire continued to work with Beatbullying and her confidence grew. She has now changed schools and has no contact with her cyber bullies, but continues to work with Beatbullying to increase awareness and help others experiencing similar problems to those that she was able to overcome.



### 3.

## What are the Consequences of Cyberbullying? Isolation and Lost Lives

The consequences of insidious cyberbullying can be reckoned in terms of both immediate physical and psychological harm and the behavioural problems to which they give rise. These include poor educational attainment, emotional suffering, social disintegration, and in extreme cases, child suicide.

In order to better understand these consequences, we again draw a distinction between isolated and persistent cases of cyberbullying. This is not to suggest that the former cannot bleed into the latter but rather to focus attention on why young people being bullied need help and identify at what points these interventions should begin.

This distinction is quite apparent when analysing the things young people said about the way cyberbullying made them feel. For those children who had received a one-off hurtful message or been the victim of an isolated bullying incident, the experience was typically described as a family or personal insult, a temporary falling out between friends, or a nasty message that they were able to brush aside. A sample of these is given below:

*“ It was very insulting. [It] say things about my family especially my mum and dead grandad. ” (Boy, 12)*

*“ Arguments are inevitable to happen on MSN; this doesn't make MSN bad. If you have an argument with your friend on MSN it is soon forgotten and it is not bullying. ” (Girl, 15)*

*“ I had done nothing to this person but this person sent me a hurtful message, so I sent one back telling them to get lost. ” (Boy, 11)*

The comments given by the one-in-13 children who reported ongoing cyberbullying documented more personal campaigns of abuse. Body and character traits were picked out and turned into objects of derision, and embarrassing things that the young person had done were frequently replayed. In turn, this systematic cyberbullying tended to be associated with greater physical repercussions, either because the victim was also being attacked offline and/or self-harming.

The comments below record the kind of things being said to children persistently bullied:

*“ Well they was taking the mick out of my weight. They do everything to hurt me. ” (Girl, 14)*

*“ I’m ugly, can’t sing, never have a boyfriend, I’m babyish, my dancing is stupid, I look like a druggie, I have no sense of fashion. I believed it. ” (Girl, 12)*

*“ I felt humiliated and sad, depressed like I had no friends. I felt like shit – sorry for the language – and at one point I cut myself. ” (Boy, 14)*

This division between incidental and persistent cases of cyberbullying is reflected in the effects that cyberbullying has on its victims. According to Ybarra et al. (2006) 33% of teenagers who had been targeted felt ‘very upset’ or ‘very afraid’ because of the cyberbullying. Likewise, Wolak (2006) reported that 30% of respondents found cyber aggression ‘distressing’. In short, not all victims of cyberbullying are emotionally affected by the incident, but given that most cases of cyberbullying consist of isolated incidents, this is what we would expect to find. It is those cases of persistent cyberbullying – which despite being a relative minority nevertheless constitute a large absolute figure – that are of greatest concern. For young people in these situations, cyberbullying can appear an encompassing and overwhelming stricture on their life.

There are two main consequences that stem from persistent cyberbullying. The first is the isolation into which young people are forced. Most obviously, despite the attachment of young people to digital technology, many feel no choice but to withdraw from online life. Our survey showed that 48% of those people persistently bullied changed their phone number, email or SNS profile in response to cyberbullying, with a smaller proportion stopping or reducing the amount of time they spent online.

This is less problematic if all it leads to is more cautious online behaviour but more worrying when a reduction in online access and rejection of certain sites compromises a young person’s ability to interact with friends and use digital technology for academic and positive purposes. In this respect, not only can cyberbullying disenfranchise victims from digital technology, it also increases their offline isolation. In their study of over 14,000 children, for example, Rivers and Noret (2009) reported that 13% of the victims of cyberbullying

‘always felt lonely’ at school, compared to just 4% of their counterparts who were not cyber bullied.

Related to this social withdrawal, the second consequence of persistent cyberbullying is witnessed in the lost lives of Britain’s children. This refers not just to the horrific act of child suicide but also to the lost childhood and wasted potential that bullying frequently begets. As Palfrey et al. (2008: Appendix C) have reported, the negative emotions linked to bullying are often improperly resolved by adolescents through self-destructive behaviours, interpersonal violence, and various forms of delinquency. This is no less the case for targets of cyberbullying.

*Our research into school performance and bullying, published in 2006, showed that 36% of all truancy could be put down to bullying.*

The most obvious act of ‘delinquency’ brought on by bullying is playing truant from school. Our research into school performance and bullying, published in 2006, showed that 36% of all truancy could be put down to bullying. This means that in an average school of 1,000 pupils, there will be 20 children missing school per day because of bullying. Absences related to bullying include faking illnesses, skipping lessons and even parent-sanctioned truancy, in which parents allow their children to stay at home for their own protection. One 13-year old girl interviewed as part of the report said of school:

*“ I am not going back, never. I don’t care. I am not going back. ”*

This girl was absent from school for a total of 18 months as a result of being ‘happy slapped’, beaten up, ignored and sent hundreds of abusive and threatening texts. As this case illustrates, due to the resonance of cyberbullying in the offline world, bullying inflicted by digital technology can also compel children into truancy.

Not only do children play truant, but even in school, their performance can be badly affected by bullying. According to one study, students in Canada who were bullied were more likely to have poor concentration and obtain low marks. These difficulties were reported by students who experienced both cyberbullying and offline, in-school bullying. The authors suggest that this is a two-way relationship: sometimes bullying leads to sadness, distraction and

demotivation, and sometimes poor performance leads to ostracisation among peers and increased teasing and ridicule. Yet in either case, the result is the same: the student suffers poor grades and emotional anguish (Beran and Li 2007: 24-25).

The DCSF have published detailed research on the subsequent impacts of this faltering education. On average, young people who reported having been bullied did substantially worse in their GCSE exams than those who did not. Indeed, the difference (14 percentage points) in the proportion achieving five good GCSEs exceeds the gender gap in performance (9 percentage points). In many cases, children being bullied slip through the net entirely. The DCSF also found that those who had been bullied were twice as likely not to be in employment, education and training at age 16 (DCSF 2008: 11).

Nor does the problem end in young age. The emotional well-being of those victims, and, indeed, the perpetrators of insidious cyberbullying is also of major concern. Ybarra and Mitchell (2007), for instance, have reported that victims, bullies and that group of children that engage in both are all more likely than others to use substances and exhibit serious mental health problems. This phenomenon is already well documented in offline bullying. Most recently, in a longitudinal study following over 5,000 children, a team of researchers in Finland found that 33% of boys who had been both bullies and victims ended up taking a psychiatric medication at some point between the ages of 13 and 24, while 17% were admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Among boys who had not been involved in bullying, the rates were 12% and 5%, respectively. Similar results were also recorded for girls (Norton 2009).

In its most extreme manifestation, the emotional distress caused by cyberbullying can lead to self-harm and child suicide. Figures from users of Beatbullying's online mentoring service CyberMentors show that 16% of those people being bullied (whether online and/or offline) said this caused them to self-harm. In a comprehensive review of existing literature on child suicide, meanwhile, researchers at Yale School of Medicine found that all reported a 'likely association' between bullying and suicide and that a number of studies found victims of bullying two-to-nine times more likely to report suicidal thoughts than other children (Kim and Leventhal 2008).

Britain has been no exception to the tragic consequences that accompany chronic child depression. Already this year, 15-year old schoolgirl Megan Gillan took a fatal overdose of painkillers in June after bullies waged a hate campaign against her on Bebo, and, two months later, another 15-year old girl, Holly Grogan, jumped to her death after being bullied on Facebook. Beyond the tragedy of a life so cruelly cut short, the fact that these young people felt

they had no alternative but to commit suicide should surely awaken us to the acute child-on-child violence made possible by cyberbullying.

In sum, while many incidents of cyberbullying may by some be considered as low level, the danger of allowing its spread is in normalising the practice of threatening, distressing or humiliating a target. This in turn paves the way for a greater proportion of isolated jokes and offhand comments to transform into persistent bullying and its destructive emotional bedfellows. As the case study shows opposite, when cyberbullying really begins to isolate young people it creates a sense of hopelessness within them that can be completely debilitating. Even the brightest and most diligent children can struggle to cope when faced with such adversity. The consequences of despair are clear. We must redouble efforts to reach these children if we are to prevent this continual loss of life.

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## Teenager Hanged Himself after Being Bullied on Bebo

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Sam Leeson was a bright 13-year-old who loved music, video games and football. But a campaign by internet bullies drove him to suicide after he was targeted because of his taste in music and love of wearing black clothes. Sam hanged himself in his bedroom after months of being bombarded by cruel jibes on Bebo.

His mother Sally said: “He was into his appearance and often wore his black skinny jeans. He was an alternative dresser and I think other teenagers did use to make comments about that. He was quite quiet and very thoughtful but he also had a lot of friends and we have been overwhelmed by the amount of people who have sent cards and left flowers and messages at the school.”

His oldest sister Emma, 22, said: “We saw him as always happy and smiling but we now think there has been some name calling about the whole emo thing. We know some bullying has been going on and we are disgusted and angry about it.”

Alongside the anonymous online bullies, his mother pins the blame for her loss on Sam hiding his anguish and refusing to discuss his troubles. She says: “If there’s anything I can say to avoid another mother going through what I have, I will say it.

“If there is anything that can come from this utterly pointless death of a lovely boy we want to try and help. Whether it is a campaign or just some way of helping people to speak out. We want to help the quiet ones who are perhaps suffering and no-one knows so this tragedy doesn’t happen to another family.”

(The Sun, 2008a; The Sun 2008b)



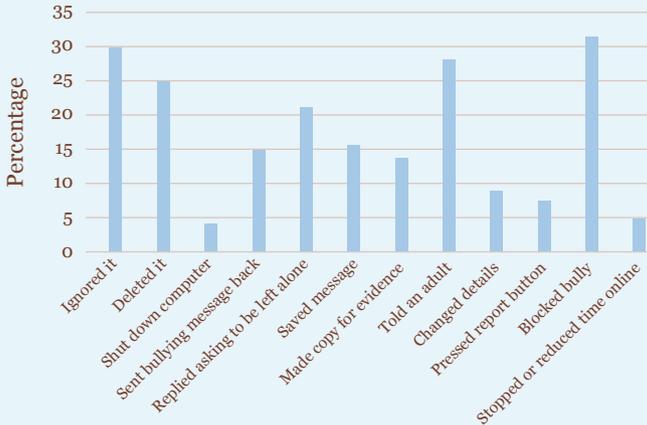
## 4.

### How to Prevent Cyberbullying? Limitations and Interventions

One possible response to the phenomenon of cyberbullying is to see it as a fault of the victim for making themselves an easy target. As a teenage contributor to a youth support website herself remarked: ‘if they are people you don’t know, or you will never meet, you can just block them off instant messenger, and they shouldn’t know your phone number anyway’ (Need2Know 2007).

In fact, many young people do take affirmative individual action to try and stem online bullying – though with decidedly mixed results. As detailed in the table below, the most common responses recorded in our survey were blocking the bully (32%), ignoring the bully (31%), telling an adult (28%) and deleting the offensive message or image (25%).

Responses to Incidents of Cyberbullying



There are some positive preventative elements to the behaviour indicated above. In particular, it is encouraging that over 25% of all bullied children and 50% of persistently bullied children told an adult about the situation.

This is significantly higher than findings reported in other studies and is an important step in averting the worst consequences of cyberbullying. However, the argument that young people can just 'log off' the online world and insulate themselves from cyberbullying only goes so far. Such is the integration of cyberspace into the real world that this 'limitation' approach is often both implausible and ineffectual.

For one, as we have already recognised, young people are relatively unwilling to limit their interactions in cyberspace by removing themselves from websites or jeopardising their access to digital technology by telling a parent, and nor should they feel they have to. The fact that only 5% of those that experienced cyberbullying followed this course of action attests to that. For another, it is worth noting that of the children that had experienced persistent cyberbullying in our survey, only 33% said they were able to take actions that put a stop to the bullying or solved the problem.

The persistently bullied children who were unable to prevent the bullying problem employed a similar range of responses to those that did bring it to a halt, but did so less keenly. This was especially pronounced in respect of blocking the sender (-5% compared to 'successful' respondents), telling an adult (-6%), replying to the bully (-11%) and their changing details (-12%). This suggests that children can help themselves from being cyber bullied to some extent if they have the confidence to acknowledge the problem and do something about it. However, this should not obfuscate the fact that most children persistently bullied did try and put a stop to it but could not.

Furthermore, we should not lose sight of the onus that this type of analysis places on the bullied children themselves to resolve the problem. As Rivers and Noret have argued, the extensions of traditional bullying coping strategies that limit the problem 'are short-term solutions to an issue that will expand as technology develops'. They also fall short because they 'require cybervictims to learn risk management strategies rather than address the attitudes and online behaviour of cyberbullies' (Rivers and Noret 2009: 24). To successfully prevent the escalation of cyberbullying, a more pronounced stakeholder approach is required.

One crucial set of stakeholders in achieving this goal are the mobile phone networks and internet service providers. It is interesting to note that reporting an incident of bullying to the network or internet service provider (which 13% of persistently bullied children did) corresponded with a 43% success rate in stopping the bullying problem. This is not to say, however, that providers were solely responsible for preventing bullying in these cases as these respondents

also reacted in a variety of other ways. Further, it also suggests that for the 87% that did not report the incidents of bullying to the network or internet provider, either the option of reporting abuse was not readily available or else the young people did not believe it would make a difference if they did report it. This corroborates findings in MSN's own study, which found that 74% of teenagers did not try to get help the last time they were cyber bullied (DCSF 2007a: 17).

*To tackle the root cause  
of the problem and  
move from prevention  
to cure we need to  
engage young people  
– both the bullies  
and bullied children  
– through targeted  
'interventions'*

Expanding on the weaknesses of current website moderation, Livingstone and Haddon have noted that 'children rarely read or understand privacy policies, that the public/private boundaries of online interfaces are often opaque to them [and] that the tools provided to select privacy options are confusing or easily mismanaged by children'. Authors go on to suggest that while 'some of this can be rectified through media literacy, for the most part, better regulation and improved interface design is called for' (Livingstone and Haddon 2009: 26).

Lending support to this challenge is the verdict of young people themselves on their online safety. For instance, while 30% of respondents said they had directly experienced cyberbullying, a bigger 48% said that they didn't think websites did enough to protect young people online. That this figure only jumps to 52% when we consider purely those children who have experienced bullying suggests that there is support across the youth spectrum for stronger reporting mechanisms and sanctions on cyberbullying. In short, young people are concerned about cyberbullying and want to stamp it out.

While more reporting from victims of bullying and better referral mechanisms would help mitigate the spread of persistent cyberbullying, they are no guarantee that it will be discontinued or that its impacts would in any way be diminished. To tackle the root cause of the problem and move from prevention to cure we need to engage young people – both the bullies and bullied children – through targeted 'interventions'. The aim of these should be to create an environment in which the negative consequences of bullying are better understood by young people and where accessible and beneficial support is available to those experiencing this blight.

One way to move toward this goal is to create greater peer-to-peer support about online safety. When questioned on the usefulness of this approach, 69% of those respondents who had experienced some form of cyberbullying said they would use advice offered by other young people on this matter. Not only would young people take advice if presented with it, in a separate poll conducted by Ofcom, 20% of 11-16 year olds said they actually needed more information on cyberbullying (Ofcom 2009a: 5).

The latest programme from Beatbullying, CyberMentors, attempts to meet this need. CyberMentors is a new service for the digital age: a traditional mentoring system delivered via a social networking site mechanism. The result is a peer-to-peer website in which young people experiencing bullying can be assisted by people their own age, who understand what they are going through.

*In just seven months, more than 1800 young people have been trained up as CyberMentors, with 186 Senior CyberMentors and counsellors providing additional adult support*

In this way the site responds to Dr. Tanya Byron's call to 'empower [children] to manage risks and make the digital world safer' (Byron 2008: 2).

In just seven months, more than 1800 young people have been trained up as CyberMentors, with 186 Senior CyberMentors and counsellors providing additional adult support. Over 110,000 individual messages were sent in this time by under 18s alone. The

site continues to prosper. As of September 2009, we had more requests to train young volunteers as CyberMentors than we were able to process.

Through this national network, children experiencing bullying can report hurtful messages, online hate sites, predatory behaviour or unacceptable content safely and in confidence. In return, they receive assured and empathetic advice on how to cope with the situation. This exchange does not only benefit those being bullied. The CyberMentors themselves – many of whom have been bullied in the past – are able to use their own life experiences to help others and improve their 'soft skills' while doing so. In this way CyberMentors can also alleviate and transform the long-term damage caused by bullying.

The comment below, given by a 16-year old girl on why she joined CyberMentors, emphasises this possibility for emotional renewal:

*“ I’ve been bullied by the same girl for six years now and to be honest I’ve had enough. I can’t trust or talk to anyone about it apart from my best mate, but he doesn’t live near me, and I’ve thought about harming lots because it’s just so hard. But I’ve also come on here to help other people. ”*

In sum, CyberMentors provides a positive, empowering service to some of the challenges posed by the increasing use of digital technology among children. By ensuring that some of the most vulnerable young people across the UK can readily access a proven safety net that itself meets leading standards of child protection, we believe that CyberMentors can reduce the worries of bullying for both children and their families. It is initiatives like this that are needed to help make digital Britain a safer Britain.

## CyberMentors

CyberMentors is a unique and pioneering programme to tackle cyberbullying and help keep safe the millions of children and young people that use social networking, mobile and text messaging services. CyberMentors are young people who help, assist and support their peers in an online virtual community, as well as on mobiles, helping to safeguard themselves and act as mentors and guides to young people they meet online.

Beatbullying's CyberMentors' programme is a variation on a proven and evidence-based theme. CyberMentors is similar to existing peer mentoring schemes, except it also exists in an online capacity. CyberMentors work with their peers in a virtual environment, assisting and mentoring their peers to ensure they are safe and can report cyberbullying safely and get the peer-to-peer support they need.

Designed by young people for young people, the emphasis is on peer-to-peer support and assistance and not adults or authority figures policing the net. However, strict child safety mechanisms are embedded in the process to ensure that inappropriate, bullying or predatory behaviour is safely reported. There are qualified counsellors available online for users to access in a serious situation, and the site is encapsulated by Net Moderator software, which automatically flags up inappropriate behaviour or serious situations, to make the website as safe as it can be.

Launched by the Prime Minister and Professor Tanya Byron in March 2009, we currently have 1815 young CyberMentors; of these 186 are Senior CyberMentors. Forty volunteer counsellors and 15 full-time and three part-time staff ensure young people always have access to expert and registered professionals.

217157

users have accessed  
CyberMentors

Of our regular users

Young carers make up 5.42%

Looked after young people make up 4.51%

13.78% of the service users have free school meals

5.74% of the service users have special educational needs

73.27% of our service users are between 12-15

63% are girls, 37% are boys

There have been a total of 155,720 mentoring interactions via private messaging. (This does not include chat messaging - we cannot currently count the volume of chat interactions; this is frustrating as the young people use chat to mentor as much as if not more than messaging, but we're working on this). Of these, 9792 have been counselling interventions and 5896 have been staff support interactions.

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## Victim of Bullying Helps Herself and Others through CyberMentors

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Georgia has been bullied for over two years. She's been bullied at school and in her local community and for the past year has been subjected to a barrage of cyberbullying via her Bebo page and MSN.

Georgia's bullies started off being her close friends and neighbour, but after some time they collectively turned against her, first leaving her out and then hurling abuse at her in school and then online. They would call her fat and ugly and would leave wall posts on her Bebo page telling her she had nothing to live for and would be better off dead. As if this was not enough, two of her bullies decided to create a hate group on Bebo asking her fellow class mates to join their vicious campaign.

Feeling like she had no one at her school she could talk to and not wanting to worry her family, Georgia would wait until she was in the house on her own, where she would then lock herself in her room and scream and cry for hours. On one particular day Georgia felt she could not take any more abuse from her online tormentors, so she locked herself in her room and started to write a suicide note.

Georgia, still only 14, said: 'I used to feel so lonely and could think of nothing else but my bullies, they made me feel so worthless. It got to the extent where I didn't even feel safe in my own home.'

Fortunately, Georgia's love for her family and inner strength triumphed and she decided she was not going to let the bullies win. With the support of her mum she spoke to her school, who talked to the bullies. The abuse became less frequent and the Bebo hate group was taken down. In a bid to take her experience and make something positive of it, Georgia enlisted on the CyberMentors training programme at her school, where she is now a fully qualified cyber mentor offering support and advice to her peers.

Georgia is no longer on Bebo and prefers to only go on the family computer which is located in the living room under the watchful eye of her mother.



## Recommendations

The transition toward digital Britain is a good thing for the UK's children. The benefits it has brought for young people to learn, interact and have fun in new environments are manifold. However, this opportunity must not come at the cost of our children's safety. For too long the focus of online safety has been on protecting children from adults and adult-derived content. This has distracted from the conduct of other young people and the bullying images, videos and websites that they are now creating. As the Internet Safety Technical Task Force reported to the US Attorneys General, to help most minors the top priority must be to address online bullying and its underlying causes (Palfrey et al. 2008: ). The case is identical in Britain.

Actions in cyberspace are traceable and subject to the same civil and legal sanctions as illegal activities anywhere else. Where threatening or menacing cyberbullying activities become criminal offences laws are in place to punish perpetrators as appropriate (DCSF 2007b: 2). Yet while it is important that schools, the government and the judiciary do take bullying and child-on-child violence as seriously as they do adult-on-child violence, recourse to the courts should always be a last resort. Not only do we risk criminalising a large number of children by leaving anti-bullying strategies to the courts, we will also fail to prevent the hundreds of thousands of cases of persistent non-criminal bullying from happening in the first place.

To achieve this prevention, we need to engage more effectively with young people themselves. Through better social policy, and sustainable practice-based intervention programmes working directly with young people, we can build on their desire to stamp out systematic cyberbullying and harness their influence to make this phenomenon socially unacceptable. To establish this policy, we make the following recommendations:

### **Greater responsibility placed on the network and internet service providers**

As cyberbullying is typically non-criminal and tends to move between different digital technologies, it is not possible to propose a purely technical solution to this problem. Nevertheless, the providers of digital technology can and should do more to limit insidious cyberbullying.

There should be better interface design and clearer reporting mechanisms on interactive websites popular with children. Industry standardisation of a single point of contact for reporting misconduct would be especially beneficial.

There should also be greater transparency of the moderation and sanctions protocol enforced by these providers so that relevant stakeholders are aware of the precautions being taken on these sites, their response time to user reports and complaints of cyberbullying, their commitments on take-down times for removing content, and their effectiveness in preventing the escalation of cyberbullying. All such commitments, on moderation, reporting mechanisms and the provision of advice and referral systems, should also be independently monitored.

### **Targeted intervention programs delivered to those young people most at risk of being persistently and seriously cyber bullied**

While certain steps can be taken to limit the more obvious and serious cases of cyberbullying, this is not a problem that can be regulated away. As previously discussed, the anonymous, accessible and decentralised nature of the internet and mobile phones are at once their benefit and their drawback. The freedom of expression offered in cyberspace is emphatically one of these double-edged swords.

What is needed is to prepare a series of safety nets for those young people victimised by non-criminal behaviour conducted in cyberspace. These resources could take the shape of counsellor services, textual and audio-visual advice sites or peer-to-peer online support networks. The crucial thing is that they are appropriate for children well-versed in using digital technology and accessible to those likely to feel isolated from their peers and responsible adults. Only by engaging with hard to reach and vulnerable groups, such as looked after young people, young carers, young people with mental health issues or problems or young people with special educational needs can we equip them with the resilience and relationships they need to overcome the emotional anxiety caused by cyberbullying.

### **Increased education about young people's role in bullying**

As highlighted throughout this report, cyberbullying is not a phenomenon removed from 'offline' bullying. While it manifests itself in new ways, the root of the problem remains embedded in emotional illiteracy and lack of understanding among young people themselves about the sources and consequences of bullying. While it would be naive to imagine that all bullies are simply uniformed and just need a helping hand back on to the right path – there remains groups of young people who require earlier and more engaging interventions in order to tackle their hostile behaviour – providing a constructive outlet for anger and fostering an appreciation of how their

behaviour impacts on others does have proven effects in reducing bullying.

In our opinion, focusing solely on ‘netiquette’ and online manners to reduce cyberbullying puts the cart before the horse. What is needed is to build a social norm of consideration among peer groups which is then applied in both online and offline behaviour. Making empathy, conflict resolution and a wider emotional vocabulary acceptable to young people is the first step in helping them to recognise bullying, regardless of whether it is online or offline, and marginalise its appeal. Beatbullying is adamant that if innovative anti-bullying programmes are adequately resourced, then more groups of children can be educated and more negative behaviour redirected to constructive ends.

### **Shared responsibility**

Industry, government and the public and third sectors must all play their part to reduce the occurrence and effects of cyberbullying and harmful online behaviour and content. This shared responsibility must also extend to families, and there is a problematic generational digital divide between adults and children. There is a need to put in place a range of policies and initiatives to increase the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence of adults, and parents in particular, to help them educate young people to stay safe using new technologies.

### **About Beatbullying**

Beatbullying works with young people to reduce and prevent bullying. We empower young people to lead anti-bullying campaigns in their schools and local communities, and build the capacity of local communities to sustain the work.

We provide anti-bullying support and workshops for schools, communities and young people, enabling them to devise their own anti-bullying strategies and solutions. All our programmes are based on peer-to-peer education, encouraging young people to take action against incidents of bullying and help others combat the problem.

- We support those who have been bullied – to improve their confidence, help them overcome the bullying, and enable them to fulfil their potential
- We work with the bullies – to help change their behaviour
- We help set up school or community-based strategies that reduce and prevent incidents of bullying
- We listen and respond to the needs of the young people we work with – they shape what we do and how we do it.

## **Programmes**

Beatbullying runs bullying prevention programmes for young people in schools and communities. We use a range of programmes, using sport, music and new technology, to engage young people. All our programmes enable young people to talk about bullying in a safe environment, and empower them to take responsibility for supporting each other and preventing bullying from happening in their communities.

Every programme focuses on educating young people about bullying issues: what it is, why it happens, what the consequences are, and most importantly, what they can do to stop it. The programmes are flexible in their delivery, and are interactive, encouraging young people to develop their own strategies and solutions to beat bullying.

## **Outcomes**

All of our programmes undergo comprehensive monitoring and evaluation and are linked directly to corresponding outputs and outcomes.

The outputs and outcomes for all of our programmes include:

- Increases in the reporting of bullying by the young people in the areas where we work
- Measurable and evaluative decrease in bullying of young people, due to the delivery of education and prevention programmes across all sectors of the community
- Greatly improved knowledge of bullying and anti-bullying strategies by young people, professionals, parents and carers through the programmes, the dissemination of literature, the use of Beatbullying's website and delivery of associated training
- Increases in the confidence and self-esteem of young people affected by bullying and empowering often socially excluded young people to develop solutions to bullying, based upon their experiences and needs
- Standardisation of response to bullying within and across sectors, localities, boroughs and regions.

Currently, our outputs, on average, show a 43% reduction of incidents of bullying, and a 60% increase in the reporting of bullying and child-on-child violence.

There are also less measurable, but no less important outcomes of our programmes. After working with Beatbullying, young people feel happier, more confident, and more likely to reach their potential. They are more outgoing and

better behaved, they feel better about themselves and they get on better with each other.

Our research and evaluation partners are the University of Sussex, New Philanthropy Capital and Beatbullying is currently being evaluated by the Department of Children, Schools and Families.

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# Appendix

## **Personal Attack**

76 said they had received a hurtful text, message, voicemail or email

56 said hurtful comments had been posted on their SNS profile

12 said a hate site had been set up about them

## **Abuse Among Peers**

53 said hurtful comments had been sent about them to someone else

41 said hurtful comments had been posted about them on someone else's site

29 said someone had made an offensive comment in a chat room for others to see

## **Goading**

80 said they received a hoax call

10 said someone had voted for them in an insulting online poll

## **Gain Notoriety**

13 said everyone can see it online

12 said it gets them noticed

20 said it earns them respect and power

## **Provoked Response**

241 said they did it for revenge or to get someone back

99 said they did it to protect themselves

43 said they were being bullied themselves

## **No Malicious Intent**

278 said they did it for a joke

## **Exposure**

24 said someone had published private information about them

20 said someone had changed a picture to humiliate them

18 said someone used their identity/password to create a false profile

11 said an offensive video clip had been taken or posted about them

**Exclusion**

14 said they had been left out of a group on purpose

12 said they had been left out or targeted through online gaming

278 said they did it for a joke

**Other**

13 said they had never been bullied (?)

7 did not categorise their experience

**Integrate with Friends**

51 said all their mates do it

42 said they were being left out

**Instigate Trouble**

42 said it's easy

79 said they were bored

19 said no-one would know it was them

177 said they were angry about stuff