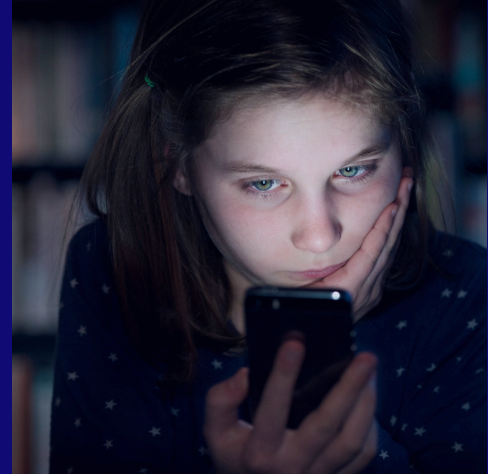


# ONLINE ABUSE

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE &  
ADULTS



## What is online abuse?

*Working Together (2023)* does not identify on-line abuse as a separate category of abuse but notes that it can be a **feature of emotional or sexual abuse**. In respect of children and young people, the NSPCC offers this definition and summary description:

“Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including:

- social media
- text messages and messaging apps
- emails
- online chats
- online gaming
- live-streaming sites

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online.”

*NSPCC website: Online abuse definition accessed September 2024*

In regards to adults, the Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 (Department of Health) includes cyber bullying as a form of emotional abuse.



# Examples of online abuse:

**Cyberbullying** is the term used to define various forms of psychological abuse akin to conventional bullying, communicated via the Internet.

For example:

- sending obscene short text messages
- sending obscene and offensive content and intimidating children via messenger applications
- obscene content conveyed during online chats
- ridiculing someone by creating a profile or blog copies with false or humiliating information
- sending threats through communicators
- publishing private video footage or photographs of an individual without their consent.

Cyberbullying usually occurs in the context of social networking sites which may be public. Mobile phone tools such as SMS or photographic and video footage captured using a mobile phone may also be used as a means of cyberbullying.

**Sexting** is the term used to describe the sending of sexually suggestive or explicit messages or photographs, typically via mobile phone.

While this can be consensual in the first instance, many images end up widely circulated or posted online, especially when relationships end. The originator quickly loses all control over the images, often with embarrassing, and potentially devastating consequences. 'Sexting' is also illegal. By sending an explicit image, a young person is producing and distributing child abuse images and risks being prosecuted, even if the picture is taken and shared with permission.

**Grooming** is the preparation and psychological manipulation of a child or adult with the intent of sexual abuse or exploitation. The first step of grooming is to gain the trust of the victim, with the groomer presenting his/her actions as beneficial for the them and this can happen online.

- this may occur in the context of private communication via messenger programmes
- it may also occur in forums or social networking sites; the individual who is initiating the grooming may have some sort of stature or position in the website which makes it easier to form a relationship with the victim
- the goal of these interactions is to arrange a meeting, or to manipulate the victim so as to obtain pornography
- grooming can be the cause of psychological harm due to the techniques used by the groomer; it also creates a harmful model of minor-adult relationships.

Your Parish Safeguarding Officer is: