**Tutor Guidance - Cyber-bullying**

This should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding (including PREVENT), Bullying and Harassment, and Online Safety policies.

**Background**

The rapid development of and widespread access to technology has provided a new medium for bullying which can occur in or outside learning sessions. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

**What is Cyber-bullying?**

Cyber-bullying may be defined as ‘the use of electronic communication, particularly mobile phones and the internet, to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature: children and adults may be reluctant to admit to being the victims of cyber-bullying’. It can take a number of different forms: threats and intimidation, harassment or ‘cyber-stalking’ (e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages), sexting (e.g. sending and receiving sexually explicit messages, primarily between mobile phones) vilification/defamation, exclusion/peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorised publication of private information/images and ‘trolling’ (abusing the internet to provoke or offend others online). It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target.

**Cyber-bullying differs from other forms of bullying in several significant ways:**

• by facilitating a far more extreme invasion of personal space. Cyber-bullying can take place at any time and intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe and personal.

• the potential for anonymity on the part of the bully. This can be extremely distressing for the victim.

• the potential for the bully to play very rapidly to a larger audience so the scale and scope of cyber-bullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying.

• through the knowledge that the data is in the world-wide domain, disproportionately amplifying the negative effect on the victim, even though the bully may feel their actual actions had been no worse than conventional forms of bullying.

• the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages as more people get drawn in as accessories. By passing on a humiliating picture or message a bystander becomes an accessory to the bullying.

• the profile of the bully and target can be different to other forms of bullying as cyber-bullying can take place between peers and across generations. Teachers can be victims and age and size are not important.

Many cyber-bullying incidents can themselves act as evidence, so it is important the ‘victim’ saves the information.

**Bullying is never acceptable, and the Service fully recognises its duty to protect all of its learners and staff and to provide a safe, healthy environment for everyone.**

**Civil and Criminal Law**

There is not a specific law which makes cyber-bullying illegal, but it can be considered a criminal offence under several different acts including Protection from Harassment Act (1997), Malicious Communications Act (1988), Communications Act (2003) Obscene Publications Act (1959) and Computer Misuse Act (1990).

**Preventing Cyber-bullying**

As with all forms of bullying the best way to deal with cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. The Cyber-bullying Policy is available on our website but there is no single solution to the problem of cyber-bullying. The Skills and Employment Service will do the following as a minimum to impose a comprehensive and effective prevention strategy.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Matthew Smith is the Safeguarding lead. Ben Watts and Jodie Ronan are Designated Safeguarding Officers and take overall responsibility for the coordination and implementation of cyber-bullying prevention and response strategies.

We will

• ensure that all incidents of cyber-bullying are dealt with immediately and will be managed and/or escalated in line with procedures set out in the Bullying and Harassment Policy, the Online safety Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

• ensure that all policies relating to safeguarding, including cyber-bullying are reviewed and updated regularly.

• ensure that all staff know that they need to report any issues concerning cyber-bullying to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

• ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities by providing clear guidance for staff on the use of technology within the Service and beyond.

• provide ongoing awareness raising for parents/carers (Family Learning) on online safety and the positive use of technology.

• plan a curriculum and support staff in delivering and addressing on online safety which builds resilience in learners so that they can protect themselves and others online.

In addition, tutors will ensure that all learners are given clear guidance on the safe and positive use of technology both in sessions and beyond, including how to manage their personal data and how to report abuse and bullying online.

**Guidance for Staff**

The Service will deal with inappropriate use of technology in line with all relevant policies which could result in disciplinary procedures.

**If you suspect or are told about a cyber-bullying incident, retain any available evidence and report to the designated lead through the normal disclosure/safeguarding procedures.**

**Online Safety at Home**

Several sites offer helpful advice to parents/carers, particularly with respect to how they can best monitor their child’s use of devices at home.

Helpful links which can be shared:

• [Parents and carers | CEOP Education](https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/)

• [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

• [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

• [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

• [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)