

Online Safety 4 Schools

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1. Sexual Harassment & Stalking

Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that may cause offense or distress or will intimidate or humiliate a person.

Sexual harassment can take many forms, it can include but is not limited to:

- making sexually degrading comments or gestures
- being stared or leered at
- unwanted or inappropriate sexual jokes or propositions
- e-mails, social media or text messages with sexual content
- unwelcome sexual advances and touching, forms of sexual assault
- displaying sexually explicit pictures in a shared space, such as at work

Sexual harassment commonly takes place in public, including workplaces, public spaces, and schools. In the UK, under the **Equality Act 2010** it is a criminal offence to cause sexual harassment, alarm or distress by a course of conduct on **more than one occasion** and conduct can include speech. Putting someone at fear of violence is when someone says or does two or more things that make you fear that violence will be used against you.

The **Protection of Freedoms Act 2012** created two new offences of stalking. Stalking is not legally defined but section **2A (3) of the Public Harassment Act 1997** lists examples of behaviours. This includes:

- (a) following a person
- (b) contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means
- (c) publishing any statement or other material relating or purporting to relate to a person, or purporting to originate from a person
- (d) monitoring the use by a person of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication
- (e) loitering in any place (whether public or private)
- (f) interfering with any property in the possession of a person
- (g) watching or spying on a person

2. Online harassment and stalking are illegal in England and Wales?

Stalking is different from harassment as it involves

- fixation
- repeated attempts to contact a person without permission in a way that could be expected to cause distress or fear.

Technology Social Media and Gaming help facilitate stalking and harassment, enabling offenders to

- impersonate others online or
- send or post hostile messages to their victim.

It is important to remember that harassment and stalking can take many different forms and can include

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| ➤ e-mails | Any |
| ➤ instant messaging | Mobile Phone / Device Messaging |
| ➤ direct messaging | Twitter Tik Tok etc |
| ➤ images | Sent – Posted - Shared |
| ➤ chat rooms | Twitch |
| ➤ forums | Discord Steam |
| ➤ social media | Instagram – Facebook |
| ➤ gaming | Fortnite – GTA – Minecraft – PlayerUnknown Battlegrounds |

3. What is Online Sexual Harassment ?

Online sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual conduct on any digital platform and it is recognised as a form of sexual violence. Online sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of behaviours that use digital content (images, videos, posts, messages, pages) on a variety of different platforms (private or public). It often manifests as hateful speech or online threats.

It can make a person feel

- threatened,
- exploited,
- coerced,
- humiliated,
- upset,
- sexualised or
- discriminated against.

There are four(4) types of online sexual harassment -

1. **Non-consensual sharing of intimate images and videos** - this type of abuse — often referred to as “**revenge porn**” — is defined as the public distribution of sexually explicit images without the consent of the victim.
2. **Exploitation, coercion, and threats** - These forms of abuse occur when “a person receiving sexual threats, being coerced to participate in sexual behaviour online, or blackmailed with sexual content.”

3. **Sexualised bullying** - When someone is excluded from a group, often systematically, through the use of humiliating or discriminatory sexual content.
4. **Unwanted sexualisation** - When a person receives “unwelcome sexual requests, comments and content,”

4. **Impact of online sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment of this kind can make a person feel any of the following:

- Threatened or scared
- Exploited
- Coerced
- That their dignity is violated
- Humiliated or degraded
- Shamed or judged
- Upset
- Sexualised
- Discriminated against because of their gender or sexual orientation
- Feel guilty or that they are to blame

The experience and impact of online sexual harassment is unique to the individual and can be felt both in the short-term but also can have long-term impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Long term impacts can be amplified because of re-victimisation if content is re-shared online, or because the initial trauma of the incident resurfaces much later. It is important to recognise that there is no single way that a young person may experience online sexual harassment and that it might also affect others who witness it.

Gender and vulnerability

- I. This harassment takes place in a gendered context
- II. is deeply rooted in structural relationships of inequality between women and men.
- III. This produces disproportionately negative outcomes and experiences for women and girls.
- IV. Indeed, girls are more likely to be targeted with online sexual harassment than boys,
- V. often resulting in more negative consequences for girls.

Online sexual harassment can intersect with discrimination and hate crimes, relating to a person’s actual or perceived

- gender,
- gender identity,
- sexual orientation,
- race, religion,
- special educational need or disability.

Young people in these groups may face unique forms of online sexual harassment, resulting in a more negative impact in both the short and long term, as well as multiple barriers that can prevent them from accessing support.

5. Stalking

Stalking is defined as persistent and unwanted attention that makes someone feel pestered and harassed. It includes behaviour that happens two or more times, directed at or towards one person by another person, causing that person to feel alarmed or distressed or to fear that violence might be used against that person.

- Stalking can go on for a long period of time,
- making a person to feel constantly anxious and afraid.
- Stalking can build up slowly
- making a person not realise for some time that they are caught up in an ongoing campaign of abuse.
- The problem isn't always 'physical' — stalking can affect you psychologically as well.
- Social media and the internet are often used for stalking and harassment, and '**cyber-stalking**' or **online threats** can be just as intimidating.

6. Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking is defined as above but includes the use on online tools and technologies to either enable the stalking or complete the stalking end to end.

Common cyberstalking activity includes

- information gathering,
- unsolicited messages (often threatening),
- surveillance,
- unauthorised access to online accounts and
- spreading misinformation about the victim.

7. Parental Advice re Stalking & Harassment

- Don't engage with the stalker
- Report to the police
- Document and evidence everything
- Restrict your social media posts to your friends and not public
- Turn off location tagging when you post
- Reduce your online footprint - Google yourself frequently
- Keep your antivirus software up to date.
- Do not use the same password for everything and change passwords regularly
- Activate two-factor authentication (or two-step verification)
- Online Security – GPS - Web Cam (TURN OFF)
- Do tell those close to you – support ask them to be careful what they post about you

National Stalking Helpline 08088020300