Internet Harassment or Cyber Bullying

Supported by Tusla's Health, Wellbeing and EAP Service

Introduction

Many people use the internet. Increasingly internet harassment is being identified as a concern at work, at home and at school.

Internet harassment, also referred to as "cyber bullying", is the term used to describe the use of the internet to harass, threaten, or maliciously embarrass.

What to look out for

Cyber Bullying can involve behaviours such as:

- Sending unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail.

- Encouraging others to send the victim unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail or to overwhelm the victim with e-mail messages.

- Sending viruses by e-mail (electronic sabotage).

- Spreading rumours.

- Making defamatory comments about the victim online.

- Sending negative messages directly to the victim.

- Impersonating the victim online by sending an inflammatory, controversial or enticing message which causes others to respond negatively to the victim.

- Harassing the victim during a live chat.

- Leaving abusive messages online, including social media sites.

- Sending the victim pornography or other graphic material that is knowingly offensive.

- Creating online content that depicts the victim in negative ways.

Some practical steps

Do not

- Do not tell anyone your password or share personal information in e-mail; even e-mail addressed to a trusted individual.

- Do not leave your computer logged in and unattended.

- Limit the information you share in your "out of office" message to the dates of your absence and who to contact. Don't broadcast that you are on holiday or on work-related travel.

- Do not attack or insult anyone while participating in discussion groups. If you disagree with the person, state your position objectively and factually.

- Do not send or reply to e-mail when you are angry or upset. Wait until you are calm and composed; you do not want to become perceived as the harasser.

- Do not respond to flaming (provocation online).

- Do not engage in any question-and-answer scenarios that make you feel uncomfortable.

N.B.:

Using your name, conduct a web search to find out what information appears around you. This way you can be aware of what information about yourself is publicly available.

Save all offending communications for evidence, both electronically and in hard copy (print). Do not edit or alter them in any way.

Harassment by email and social media

If someone is harassing you by e-mail:

- If you are the victim of harassment relating to your fostering status link with your fostering social worker to agree a communication strategy and if appropriate contact an Garda Siochana.

- Do not reply to unsolicited, harassing or offensive e-mail if the harasser is not known to you. By responding, you confirm that your e-mail address is valid and active.

- Do not open attachments as they may contain viruses and keep a log of any harassing activity.

If someone is harassing you via Social Media:

- Always think before you post – are these words or this photo something you would want everyone to see? Could your comments elicit a potentially harmful reaction?

- Use highest privacy settings provided by the site.

- Unfriend, hide, block, or mute another user from seeing your profile.

- Remove tags on posts or photos.

- Keep personal details private, be aware of the details you're showing in photos, such as address numbers, street names, and work buildings.

- Avoid retaliating. Most bullies are looking to get a reaction.

How to help prevent online harassment

While every situation is different, in general, steps to help prevent cyber bullying can include:

• Make your e-mail password complex with at least twelve (12) characters long with a combination of capital and lower-case letters, numbers, and symbols.

• Change your password monthly.

• Watch for warning signs online, for example someone asking where you work or where you live.

• Be very cautious about meeting online acquaintances in person. If you choose to meet, do so in a public place and don't go alone.

Protect your information

• Check the privacy settings on Social Media accounts.

• Don't publish your personal phone or email on web pages.

• Think about providing your email on online forms or surveys; is it necessary to share?

Lets work together, to help each other.

How Tusla Can Help

Your fostering link worker is a good first point of contact if you need support. In the event that you do not have a fostering link worker or they are away you can contact your local fostering team. The fostering service can support you or put you in contact with an appropriate professional or service.

Many areas run Tusla fostering support groups which are spaces for carers to come together and share their experiences. Your local department or link worker can give you details on these groups.
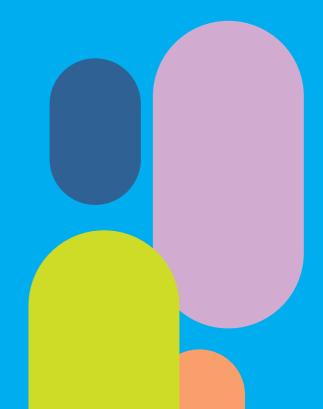
Tusla also operate a fostering peer support service for new carers or those dealing with new challenges. You can get details for this through your link worker or local fostering department.

If you cannot contact Tusla and have an immediate concern about the safety of a child, please contact An Garda Síochána. The Service is for emergencies only and does not replace the role of your fostering link worker. The support offered is always in the context of an emergency situation that has arisen out of hours.

Tusla Fostering

TUSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Visit: fostering.ie
Freephone: 1800 800 211
Email: tusla.fostering@tusla.ie