

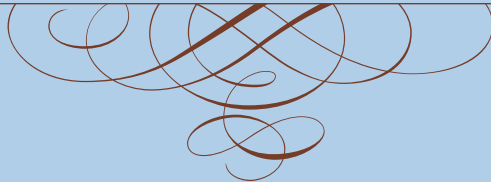
**Beatbullying**

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**VIRTUAL VIOLENCE II:  
Progress and Challenges in the  
Fight against Cyberbullying**

Commissioned by Nominet Trust  
In Association with the  
National Association for Head Teachers (NAHT)

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“The mind once enlightened cannot again become dark.”

Thomas Paine,  
The Age of Reason, 1794

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London 2012

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“ It made me feel so mad, it was like I couldn’t get away from it all so I self-harmed and it kind of made me feel better. ”

(Girl, 13)

“ The perpetrators do this in out of school time but it is invariably brought into school and school staff have to spend time dealing with it. The technology moves on and changes so quickly, it is difficult for non technical people to keep up with. ”

(Secondary School Teacher in Derbyshire)

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# CONTENTS

Forward to Virtual Violence II by Annika Small, Director of Nominet Trust	4
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	12
Methodology	18
Thematic Findings	21
Recommendations	43
References	50
Appendix	52

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## Foreword to Virtual Violence II

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by Annika Small, Director of Nominet Trust

Nominet Trust is a champion of the possibilities of online technology in all its positive and exciting forms. The internet allows people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to connect, socialise, develop skills, create, innovate, take action and learn. The rise of the internet – sometimes described as a revolution – is profoundly and permanently reshaping many aspects of our lives and putting within our reach one of the most powerful and accessible tools ever invented.

However, the internet can be used as a tool for harm as well as good, and the open and unregulated nature of the digital environment offers risks as well as opportunities. One of these risks is the use of new technologies to harass and victimise others, known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a particularly damaging form of bullying and it is impossible to underestimate how destructive it can be. It erodes self-esteem and confidence, relationships with family and friends suffer, and harmful or risky behaviours come to be seen as ways of coping with pain. Bullied children are at higher risk of depression, achieving below their potential in school and dropping out of education altogether.

So whilst Nominet Trust is dedicated to working with, investing in and supporting people committed to using the internet to change the world for the better, we are fully aware of the seriousness of the risks faced by people online, including cyberbullying, and recognise Beatbullying as being at the forefront of innovative approaches to combat it.

I am therefore delighted that the Trust has commissioned the second Virtual Violence study, Beatbullying's large-scale, in-depth study of cyberbullying among children, young people and teachers in the UK. The research builds on the first Virtual Violence study conducted in 2009 and adds valuable depth to our understanding of cyberbullying. Such research allows us to measure the extent and impact of the problem in order to shape appropriate solutions; the findings of this report will help to map the changing landscape of digital aggression, progress made and what still remains to be done.

Nominet Trust is proud to support Beatbullying's work with children and young people affected by bullying, using innovative technological approaches to maximise the potential of the internet for good and reduce its power to harm. It is imperative that we tackle the misuse of the internet as a weapon and promote its multitude of positive uses as a tool for learning, exploring and connecting, so that both children and the internet can achieve their amazing

potential. As a social investor with a strong commitment to positive change through online technology, Nominet Trust is proud to stand with Beatbullying in its campaign to achieve that.

## Executive Summary

The latest findings from Beatbullying reveal that 28% of 11-to-16-year-olds have been deliberately targeted, threatened or humiliated by an individual or group through the use of mobile phones or the internet. For over a quarter of these, this experience was ongoing, meaning that the individual was continuously targeted for bullying by the same person or group over a sustained period of time. This suggests that one-in-13 secondary-aged school children have experienced persistent and intentional cyberbullying.

Given that there are approximately 4,377,780 secondary-aged children in the UK (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2011), these figures can be projected to suggest that 350,222 children may have suffered persistent and insidious bullying inflicted via technology. These findings closely mirror Beatbullying's first Virtual Violence study delivered in November 2009 (Cross, Richardson, Douglas & von Kaenel-Flatt, 2009), and give us significant insight into the nature of this form of bullying in the UK.

Of those young people who reported being persistently cyberbullied, just under a quarter (23%) said that it lasted for a year or more and two-in-five (40%) said that it lasted for months or weeks. Over a quarter (26%) said that the bullying happened more than 10 times, over a tenth (14%) between six and 10 times, and a third (29%) between three and five times.

*28% of 11-to-16-year-olds have been deliberately targeted, threatened or humiliated by an individual or group through the use of mobile phones or the internet.*

The findings also present an interesting insight into where the bullying originates. For those 'persistently cyberbullied', a quarter (26%) said that the bullying first happened online, but 44% said that it started offline (that is, the person was first targeted face-to-face and the bullying then continued online). While this indicates that 'persistent cyberbullying' still tends to originate offline and then follows the victim online, there is a notable decrease in how often this is occurring when compared to the original Virtual Violence study carried out in 2009 – which found two-thirds (62%) of those who were 'persistently cyberbullied' were first bullied offline. Indeed, within the total sample of those who had experienced cyberbullying, only two-in-five (20%) said that

their experience was an extension of offline bullying, with a quarter (27%) saying that the bullying they had experienced had started online. Therefore, this would indicate that bullying is becoming an increasingly more common phenomenon that starts online, paving the way for more relentless attacks.

Purposeful recurring attacks can easily overwhelm a young person being cyberbullied, leaving them feeling anxious, tormented and increasingly marginalised. Whilst one-off incidents can undoubtedly cause damage at the time, our research shows that victims of such incidents are less inclined to follow the paths of self-harming or self-destructive behaviour that are those who are more persistently bullied.

Overall, 20% indicated that fear of the bullies made them reluctant to go to school, 19% experienced reduced confidence and self-esteem and 14% did not feel safe. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, 5% self-harmed and 3% reported attempting suicide as a result of their experience of cyberbullying. These emotional and behaviour consequences were amplified among children who reported persistent and intentional cyberbullying.

*“Through this bullying which was not just on the internet, I tried to commit suicide, ended up going to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and stopped going to school. The only reason it has improved is because I left school”. (Girl, 16)*

The study also reveals a significant reduction in the percentage of children reporting cyberbullying others: from 33% in 2009 to 17% in 2011. Although this is not conclusive evidence to show that the number of incidents of cyberbullying is decreasing, it may suggest that cyberbullying is becoming increasingly recognised as socially unacceptable. The reduction in children reporting victimising others might reflect a change in attitude towards how comfortable children feel in “admitting” to cyberbullying others. It may be that children are still cyberbullying others, but feel more reluctant to state doing so, as the act of cyberbullying is more socially unacceptable. These positive changes might be partly attributed to increase in work across organisations and communities to tackle the problem.

*“I have been sent a text message about a teacher and I sent this text message on because I did not like the teacher and at the time I was being bullied myself so I wanted to see what it felt to be the bully even though at the time it did not feel like bullying”. (Girl, 12)*

However, there remains a significant number of young people who do not take sufficient action when responding to, or dealing with, incidents of cyberbullying. Despite much publicised efforts from internet service providers and mobile phone providers amongst others, promoting advice to users on how to protect themselves from cyberbullying, the messaging does not appear to have had significant impact. Indeed, when young people are cyberbullied, fewer numbers are reporting it to the service provider in comparison to 2009, and fewer are following the recommended actions of telling someone, blocking the perpetrator, and saving the evidence.

It is widely acknowledged that cyberbullying is not just a problem for children and young people, but for adults as well. Our latest findings reveal that one-in-10 teachers report experiencing harassment through a technological medium, and nearly half (48%) have witnessed or heard about this type of harassment directed against one of their colleagues. Given that there are approximately 198,800 secondary-school teachers in England (DfE, 2011a); this figure can be extrapolated to suggest that 19,880 teachers may have been subject to this form of aggression.

Nearly all (91%) of respondents reported it as an isolated incident arising out of something that happened within the school, suggesting that the issue of online harassment is generally less targeted and persistent for this group. However, the severity of its impact should not be underestimated. Our survey findings reveal that as a consequence of being cyberbullied, teachers felt afraid for their safety or that of their family (15%), felt mentally and emotionally violated (9%) or said that their teaching suffered as a result of a loss in confidence (6%). In addition, 3% contemplated leaving the teaching profession and 3% resigned altogether. As well as the individual human cost of these traumatic experiences, these findings have clear implications for the wider society when dedicated and talented professionals leave teaching or are put off entering the profession altogether due to victimisation or the fear of it.

Not only are teachers subject to this form of harassment, but they are also dealing with cases involving their pupils. We asked schools to nominate one member of staff who would be best placed to respond to a survey on bullying, so we could understand the issue in more depth. Three-quarters (77%) of respondents had dealt directly with a case of cyberbullying and the average number of cyberbullying cases which respondents had dealt with in total was 13, further highlighting the extent of the problem. That is not to say that every teacher will have dealt with this number of incidents; these staff members were selected by their school because of their role, and as such we might assume



that they would be the teachers most likely to have dealt with incidents of cyberbullying across the whole school, thus explaining the high number of incidents being dealt with by these particular teachers.

*“Cyberbullying comes in waves and is very time consuming to sort. Parents and students often fail to take or act upon the advice given which encourages the cyberbullying to continue”. (Head of Year at a secondary school, Leicestershire)*

Dealing with incidents of cyberbullying can be time consuming and costly. Our findings show that on average, these nominated teachers are spending six hours per week dealing with cases of cyberbullying among their pupils. Most time is spent dealing with the repercussions in terms of managing behaviour, investigating incidents and reporting incidents. The economic cost of dealing with cases of cyberbullying is therefore significant. We estimate that nearly £18 million of the education budget may be spent on dealing with cases of cyberbullying per year. Although this calculation is based on a broad and conservative set of assumptions, the human costs and damaging consequences coupled with the economic costs should make this an immediate priority in intervention terms.

*“People think that they can say whatever they want to behind a computer screen...It needs to be reported much more than it is as it really affects young people, it has definitely shaped who I am today”. (Girl, 17)*

Cyberbullying continues to be a dangerous problem for a significant number of young people, and the associated issues within educational settings are manifold. We must not ignore the complex and often devastating effects of cyberbullying, but rather take responsibility for both preventing such behaviour, and dealing effectively with incidents when they occur. This responsibility sits with many different stakeholders, as we must look at both the behaviour as well as the technology being used, or abused, to facilitate the behaviour. As technological advances are made, it is essential that we place sufficient focus on using technological solutions to prevent harmful incidents taking place, as well as ensuring that our policies and education in the offline world are current and responsive to the changing issues and behaviours that are taking place online.

As such, we propose a series of recommendations and policy reforms. These include:

**Service Providers (e.g. social networking sites, mobile phone networks) must do more to protect their users and to respond to incidents of cyberbullying that take place via their service**

In particular, we recommend:

- Clearer and simpler reporting mechanisms, especially where a service is marketed and provided to children, making it easier for users to report cyberbullying
- Improved transparency and communication of protocols followed when reports of cyberbullying are made, including average response times, so that relevant stakeholders know what to expect and users reporting cyberbullying are able to know the timescale for action with regards to when and if the problem will be dealt with and if and when the content will be removed
- Increased moderation of user-generated content, possibly through a skilled third party. This moderation is especially important where a service is proactively promoted and used by children
- Prominent signposting to sources of expertise, advice, support and help for children and young people affected by cyberbullying
- Independent monitoring of a voluntary code of practice for industry, with the results promoted to parents and children.

**Service providers must work more closely with the organisations dealing with the consequences and aftermath of cyberbullying that is taking place through their services, providing both support and funding**

Children and young people who experience cyberbullying seek support; support that is not, and cannot be delivered by the service providers themselves, but by external agencies. Internet service providers, social networking sites and mobile phone networks must, therefore, support and provide funding to those services that intervene and offer help to their users who have been cyberbullied.

**All schools must develop and implement an anti-bullying strategy that includes practical measures to prevent and deal with incidents of cyberbullying**

We recommend:

- A designated teacher (within the Senior Leadership Team) responsible for anti-bullying work, who is in charge of the programmatic implementation and oversight of the school's bullying prevention and intervention plan
- Procedures and mechanisms for the recording and reporting of incidents of bullying, including cyberbullying
- Cyberbullying to be included and referenced in all behaviour, anti-bullying and acceptable use policies
- All teachers to be given training, support and guidance in dealing with bullying, including cyberbullying, so that they can better identify, resolve, and prevent incidents concerning children in their care
- More education programmes, specifically focusing on cyberbullying.

**Campaigns to raise awareness and educate young people about how to respond and deal with incidents of cyberbullying need to be re-focused**

All stakeholders, including Government, service providers and internet safety organisations, should re-examine and assess the impact of their existing strategies and campaigns to keep children safe online. The Government should revisit its child internet safety strategy, Click Clever, Click Safe, launched in December 2009, as well as measure the impact of other campaigns. Efforts in these areas must be re-doubled, with the necessary changes made to successfully reach children and young people with the right messages that will keep them safe.

**Government must continue to recognise the damage caused by bullying, and support proven anti-bullying programmes**

Beatbullying is adamant that if innovative anti-bullying programmes are adequately resourced, then more groups of children can be educated and negative behaviour can further be redirected to constructive ends.

## Introduction

Much has changed in the landscape of cyberbullying in the two years since the first Virtual Violence report in 2009. Advances in technology, including the rapid rise of hand-held devices to access the internet (Ofcom, 2011a; Ofcom, 2011b), are presenting a new range of opportunities and risks; for example four-in-10 (43%) of children now access the internet in private settings (Ofcom, 2011a) rendering largely obsolete the guidance to parents about keeping the family computer in the living room. New trends are emerging in internet and mobile technology use, including the phenomenal expansion of social networking sites and along with it the rise in their use by children under 13, (Ofcom, 2011a).

Children and young people in the UK and others have committed suicide in cases where electronic bullying was a major or contributory factor: these events have galvanised efforts to combat the problem through various channels, including, particularly in the USA, the criminal justice system. In addition to the victimisation of young people by their peers, there has in recent years been increased attention to the growing problem of electronic harassment of teachers by pupils and parents. Cyberbullying, rapidly emerging both as a research topic and a public concern in 2009, is now, at the end of 2011, squarely in the legislative, social and political spotlight.

This changing landscape is reflected in the social, political and cultural context, which is developing to take into account not only the new reality of communications technology but also the increasing recognition of bullying – in all its forms – as a serious problem with a profound and long-term impact on children’s lives. The most recent Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), while not exploring cyberbullying specifically, does make explicit reference to bullying generally as “a serious problem” with a severe impact on children’s capacity to learn and achieve in school. It cites research which finds bullied pupils attaining significantly lower grades at GCSE and at increased risk of disengagement from education. The current DfE guidance on this topic, *Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies* (DfE, 2011b), references cyberbullying as a specific area of bullying and makes the point that some types of cyberbullying are explicitly illegal under several laws, including the Communications Act 2003 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Due in part to the pressure exerted by Beatbullying’s campaign *The Big March 2010* – the world’s first digital

demonstration – which called on the Prime Minister and the Government to do all they could to ensure children’s safety from bullying, the area of Behaviour and Safety is now identified as part of schools’ “core educational purpose” and is one of only four areas assessed in Ofsted inspections. The inclusion of this issue as a major area

*Children and young people in the UK and others have committed suicide in cases where electronic bullying was a major or contributory factor*

of focus in two definitive papers on education policy indicates the seriousness with which the Government is now taking it.

This is in keeping with a wider political concern for children’s and young people’s online safety. The Parliamentary Inquiry into Online Child Protection conducted from August to October 2011, has resulted in a commitment by the UK’s four major Internet Service Providers – BT, TalkTalk, Virgin Media and Sky – to implement the core recommendations of the Bailey Review (DfE, 2011c) into the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood. This includes the “Active Choice” model of filtering for adult content, where both new and existing customers of these ISPs will be asked specifically to choose whether to activate parental controls. Although these initiatives are concerned with ‘adult content’ – such as pornography and violence – rather than cyberbullying, the implementation of the recommendations demonstrates that ISPs are beginning to be responsive to concerns about children’s online safety.

The most recent findings on the prevalence of cyberbullying are, as ever, disparate. EU Kids Online II, the large-scale pan-European study conducted between 2009 and 2011 with 25,000 children and young people in 25 European countries (EU Kids Online II, 2011), estimates the prevalence to be at the very low rate of 6%, while research from the US-based Cyberbullying Research Center (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010) (sic) finds 20% and a study by UKCCIS (2009) in conjunction with the DfE 19%. These results are more in line with, though still considerably lower than, our own finding of 30% from the first Virtual Violence study in 2009 (Cross et al, 2009). Following this pattern, the proportion admitting bullying others is reported as 3% in the EU Kids Online II study, 20% by the Cyberbullying Research Center and 33% in Virtual Violence (2009).

Disparities of this nature are nothing new: possible explanations include differences in sample sizes, methodologies and questions asked, as well as cultural variations in the incidents of cyberbullying. The EU Kids Online

II study canvassed experience of the internet in a wide range of areas, with bullying being only one of many topics covered, while the studies reporting much wider prevalence focused on bullying specifically, allowing for much deeper exploration of this single area. The EU Kids Online II study also had a far wider scope geographically, covering 25 countries at various stages of internet and mobile usage, including those where significant numbers of people are not yet online. This is probably one reason why rates of reported cyberbullying in this study are comparatively low. Interestingly however, the study found that despite the small proportion of respondents reporting actually having been bullied in this way, this was the online risk that upset them the most: more than sexual messages, sexual images or the possibility of meeting someone in person whom they only knew online.

The development of cyberbullying research over the past several years is allowing for an increasingly nuanced and responsive understanding of the issue. There are some important pieces of research from the past two years which explore significant emerging areas of concern, particularly: the specific risks to, and impacts on, vulnerable groups; the relationship between being victimised and bullying others both online and offline; and the increasingly seamless interaction between the online and offline worlds.

These issues are closely interrelated. As communications technology advances and extends into more areas of people's lives, it is likely that the distinction between the 'real' and online 'worlds' will become increasingly obsolete. The ways in which people are now using these technologies to socialise, work, play, relax, learn and stay informed, indicate a seamless blending of on- and offline spaces, rather than jumping between different realities. An illustration is the growth of internet use through mobile and hand-held devices such as smartphones, iPads and games consoles, 33% of nine-16-year-olds surveyed for the EU Kids Online II study reported going online through a mobile phone or other hand-held device; this proportion can be expected to increase as uptake grows and the technology becomes standard.

These developments have far-reaching implications both for the issue of cyberbullying and for the challenge of tackling it. With the growth of technology comes the growth of opportunities, platforms and techniques for bullying, and it is likely that the unique features that experts originally identified as making this form of aggression so harmful when it first emerged – relentlessness, anonymity, limitless accessibility, invasiveness anywhere and at any time – are ever increasing. However, this profound change in the landscape is also driving changes in how online behaviour is viewed. There have been a significant

number of child and teenage suicides caused by relentless online aggression. In the face of this, it is increasingly difficult to argue that the online world is not 'real' when activities there can have such devastating repercussions in the real lives of young people.

The research shows that while cyberbullying generally has a negative impact on victims, there are certain groups for whom the risks – both the risk of being targeted and of incurring serious harm as a result – are significantly increased. Socio-economic or educational disadvantage, disability, minority ethnic origin (some groups) and LGBT status are indicators of a high risk for cyberbullying.

Research from the US highlights the heightened prevalence of victimisation among LGBT youth. A study by the Cyberbullying Research Center (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010) has found that among their 11-18-year-old sample those least likely to be cyberbullied are heterosexual boys and young men (16%) and the most likely lesbian and bisexual girls and young women (38%). The proportion of LGBT young people who report having been cyberbullied at any point over their lifetimes (36%) and in the past month (17%) are significantly higher than their heterosexual peers (20% & 7% respectively). Interestingly, this pattern also holds true for bullying others: while 8% of heterosexual respondents admitted cyberbullying someone during the past month, 21% of LGBT respondents did. The authors see the close relationship between being bullied and bullying others as indicating that retaliation is a strong element in a high proportion of aggressive behaviour, whether directly against the original bully or more indirectly by taking out anger on someone else.

The EU Kids Online II study has identified four categories of children who are most vulnerable to online risk. Children whose parents are less educated, those whose parents do not use the internet (25% of the total sample), disabled children and those from minority ethnic groups, all reported both encountering higher risk online and being more upset by disturbing material. These findings across a wide range of measures of online risk are not directly comparable to, but nonetheless follow the same pattern of our own findings from the first Virtual Violence study. Our research found that certain categories of children officially classified as 'vulnerable', while no more likely than their peers to be cyberbullied overall, are significantly more likely to be targets of persistent cyberbullying (harassment that is repeated and ongoing over a period of weeks or months to years.) Of these children, 16% of children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs and 13% of those receiving free school meals reported experiencing this sustained form of aggression,

compared to 9% of their 'non-vulnerable' peers. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds are also at increased risk: almost a quarter (24%) of those who are persistently cyberbullied are from white non-British backgrounds; those of mixed or Chinese origin report the next highest rates at 19% and 15% respectively, compared to 11% who are white British. This breakdown suggests that recent immigrants are most at risk from cyberbullying with a strong racist or nationalistic element; these children are also more likely than the general population to face multiple barriers such as economic insecurity, difficulty with English and lack of access to support.

The children who are most vulnerable to online abuse are also the most likely to lack access to the support, guidance and resources that could help them; these children thereby face a double disadvantage. There is a knowledge gap; skills, support and resources tend to accrue around the people who are already privileged, while those who most need these things have least access to them.

Cyberbullying is increasingly being recognised as a problem not only for children and young people but also for adults, particularly teachers. The rise of hand-held internet and mobile technologies in classrooms and the widespread use of social networking and rating platforms such as RateMyTeachers.com are increasing the vulnerability of school staff to abuse by pupils, parents and others. According to recent research from the UK, between 35% and 60% of teaching staff have either been victimised themselves or know of a colleague who has experienced this. A study by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ALT) in conjunction with the Teacher Support Network (TSN) (2010) surveyed 630 teachers and support staff and found that 15% had been harassed online (the most common methods being photos or videos, hate sites and abusive messages) while a further 45% knew of a colleague who had experienced this. Research by the University of Plymouth in 2011 (Phippen, 2011) with 377 primary- and secondary-school teachers across the country found 35% reporting that either they or a colleague had been targeted by some form of online abuse. While the vast majority of abuse (72%) was identified as coming from pupils or former pupils, 26% was perpetrated by parents of pupils and, interestingly, 12% by other teachers. The most-commonly cited platforms for cyberbullying teachers were RateMyTeachers.com (offensive and upsetting comments), Facebook (hate groups) and YouTube (uploading videos).

It is clear from the research that teachers find this an extremely distressing experience. The ATL / TSN study (2010) found 39% of respondents reported losing confidence, 25% that the quality of their teaching was adversely affected



and a small but significant minority of 6% had to be signed-off work due to stress or related conditions. Qualitative accounts illustrate the human cost of this abuse in the lives of individuals, with depression, breakdowns, physical sickness and in some cases suicidal feelings, all being reported as consequences (ATL/ TNS,

*This evidence makes it clear that cyberbullying and harassment are significant problems for children and adults alike*

2010, cited in Teaching Expertise, 2010). It is notable and concerning that a large majority of teachers who are victims of this abuse do not feel adequately supported: according to the survey conducted by Professor Phippen for the University of Plymouth (2011), 70% of victimised teachers report 'little or no' useful help from senior management, finding that unions and the police did little to resolve the problems. Unsurprisingly, in view of this, 75% said that more help and support is needed.

This evidence makes it clear that cyberbullying and harassment are significant problems for children and adults alike. So far, the focus of both publicity and support has tended to be on cyberbullying as it affects children and young people; it is now becoming evident that support also needs to be targeted at adults, particularly teachers, who experience this form of harassment. Research clearly shows that bullying and abuse are devastating at any age; it is crucial that while we as professionals, organisations and agencies work to build on the support base that is offered to young people being bullied in their schools and online, we also develop support strategies and networks for teachers suffering victimisation in the schools where they work.

## Methodology

In 2009, Beatbullying's Virtual Violence study found that 30% of secondary-school pupils (11-to-16-year-olds) had experienced some form of cyberbullying. Two years on, Nominet Trust commissioned Beatbullying to deliver a follow-up investigation of this form of bullying as technology develops, this time including the experiences of teachers and other educational professionals who may have been victimised in this way.

The study included two main components:

- A comprehensive survey for children and young people designed to measure the levels, intensity, methods and motivations of cyberbullying, types of incidents reported, reactions and responses, emotional effects and consequences, and coping strategies; and
- A comprehensive survey for teachers and educational professionals designed to measure the levels of cyberbullying recorded within a school, prevalence of harassment, and effective support strategies available for teachers and pupils.

The pupil survey was drawn up in consultation with young people and Beatbullying's practitioners, who have extensive experience in visiting schools and working with children and young people on the issue of bullying. A mixture of closed and open questions were posed. Closed questions were used to aggregate answers for statistical purposes, yielding numerical findings that could be generalised to the wider population. Open questions were posed to allow respondents to express themselves and elaborate on the answers provided. This meant that respondents were not limited only to a prescribed menu of answers.

The pupil survey encompassed the views of over 4,605 children and young people located in the following areas of the UK: Channel Islands (.2%), East Midlands (15.3%), East of England (2.3%), London (9.6%), North East (4.0%), Northern Ireland (.8%), North West (12.7%), Scotland (1.8%), South West (7.6%), South East (3.6%), Wales (15.9%), West Midlands (15.6%), and Yorkshire and Humber (10.6%).

The sample broadly corresponds with the total population demographics with almost equal female and male representation (49% and 46% respectively). The majority (78%) of respondents were White in ethnicity. Other main

ethnicity types represented include: Asian (13%), Black (4%), Mixed (3%) and Other (1%). A Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) was reported by 4% of respondents and 16% said they had Free School Meals (FSM) – an indicator of socio-economic deprivation used within the Deprivation Index. Fieldwork took place between September and December 2011.

Pupils completed the surveys in groups, using the school ICT suite and under the supervision of one or more members of staff. The surveys were completed in registration, Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) lessons to avoid any disruption to curriculum activities. Pupils were allowed approximately 30 minutes to complete the survey, although schools allowed time for pupils with different reading levels and cognitive abilities. Before beginning the surveys, pupils were told that they were going to be asked to fill in surveys about their experiences of cyberbullying (if any), and that their answers were going to be used in order to help stop cyberbullying. In order to preserve their anonymity, pupils did not have to give their names. A short definition of cyberbullying was provided to ensure that the children were aware of what the survey was asking them about. The following instructions were provided:

- There are no right or wrong answers;
- Different pupils will often give different answers;
- No-one except Beatbullying will see what you've written, unless we feel that you or somebody else is at risk of harm;
- Answer honestly by saying what is true for you;
- You can skip any questions that you do not want to answer;
- You do not have to give your name; and
- The survey should be completed on your own. However, pupils may ask the supervisor(s) or staff for help if they do not understand the questions.

Once the survey was completed, a message was displayed thanking the pupils for their help and providing the contact details of support available. At this point, pupils were reminded of the normal procedures for seeking help if they are feeling upset. This included the name of at least one contact person within the school and notification of other support strategies available for pupils (e.g. peer mentors or anonymous worry box, etc.). Since it was possible that some pupils could be feeling upset, yet not be confident enough to approach a teacher or adult for help, staff who regularly work with the students were notified that the pupils had completed the surveys, allowing them to monitor the pupils and

ensure that support was available.

The teachers' survey covered the views of 339 professionals located in the following areas of the UK: Dorset, Northumberland, Hertfordshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Gloucestershire, North Yorkshire, Inner London, Outer London, Nottinghamshire, Cumbria, Devonshire, Staffordshire, East Sussex, Durham, Bristol, South Yorkshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, West Sussex, and West Yorkshire. Respondents had been working within the education field for an average of 17.0 years.

We worked closely with the NAHT, to ensure an accurate representation of secondary school teachers. Just over three-quarters (77%) were from state schools, 19% were academies and 3% from private, independent or grammar schools. The vast majority of schools (90%) were mixed-sex, 7% girls only and 3% boys only. The average number of pupils enrolled per school was 789, of which an average of 80 had a Statement of Special Educational Needs and an average of 161 were eligible for Free School Meals.

We asked schools to nominate one member of staff who would be best placed to complete a survey on cyberbullying – it was usually the person responsible for anti-bullying work within the school or a member of the school's Senior Management Team. As such, the sample includes a wide range of different roles within the education profession: Head Teachers (3%), Assistant Head Teachers (31%), Heads of Departments (28%), Heads of Year (7%), Teachers (3%) and professionals with a pastoral support role such as Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo), Learning Mentors, and Counsellors (28%).

We provided a covering letter to all respondents detailing 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 harassment, to ensure that all respondents were aware of what we were asking them to talk about. Respondents did not have to give their name or the name of the school, and were told that they would not be named or identified in the written report. In addition, respondents could skip questions that they did not feel comfortable answering.

## Thematic Findings

### 1. Who are the victims of cyberbullying and harassment?

#### Children and Young People's Findings

The latest findings from our survey of over 4,600 secondary-aged children and young people reveal that 28% have experienced some form of cyberbullying. This represents a 2% reduction from our earlier Virtual Violence study delivered in 2009. Although this was not a direct comparative research study in its design, and although the timing, location, and sample of the study varied widely, it is notable that the findings from the two studies are closely aligned.

Regarding the types of incidents reported, 13% said that someone had sent them a text message that was meant to hurt their feelings, make fun of them or scare them – the most frequent form of cyberbullying reported; 10% said that they had received nasty comments via

their social networking profile; 7% said that they had got a call to their mobile phone saying horrible things and 7% had had their password or online identity stolen. A further 5% indicated that someone had published public or private information about them; 4% said someone posted pictures of them in order to humiliate them; and 2% were voted for in an offensive online poll. A further 2% had a hate site set up about them.

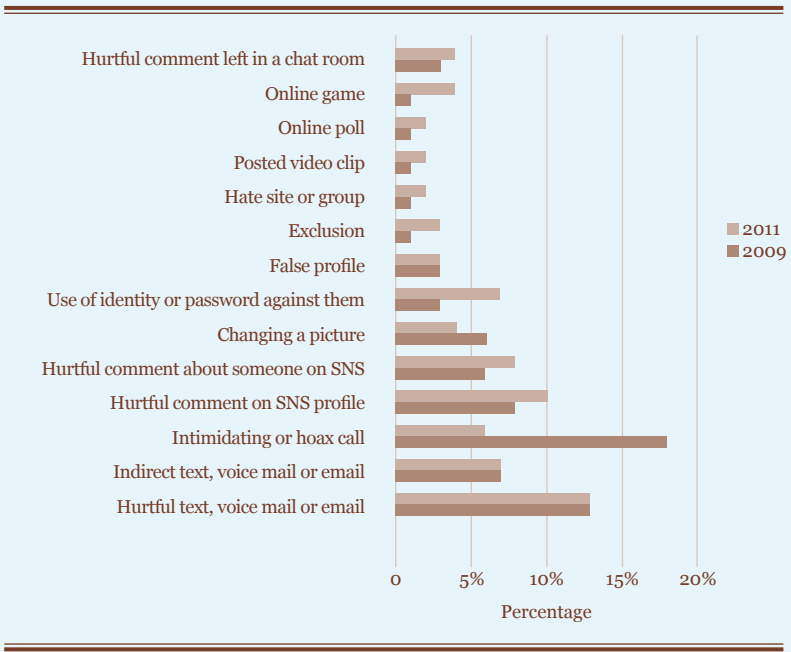
*More of the cyberbullying incidents reported tend to be internet-related, with increased cyberbullying on social networking sites...*

*"It is worse being bullied over the internet because everyone can see and it makes you feel really little and small". (Girl, 13)*

These findings corroborate with our earlier study as the pattern of incidents is virtually replicated. However, there is a significant reduction in the number of young people reporting intimidating phone or hoax phone-calls – suggesting that this form of abuse is less common now. This might indicate a shift in the use of mobile phone technology, as young people perhaps use their phones

more for texting or surfing the internet than for making calls.

More of the cyberbullying incidents reported tend to be internet-related, with increased cyberbullying on social networking sites, more cyberbullying reported in online games – although still relatively low – and an increase in the number of young people reporting having their identity or password used against them as a form of cyberbullying. Increased usage of social networking sites, and advances in interactive online gaming might be factors for these slight shifts between 2009 and 2011.



The findings show that 32% of females had experienced some form of cyberbullying, compared to 23% of males, indicating that girls are more likely to experience cyberbullying in comparison to their male counterparts.

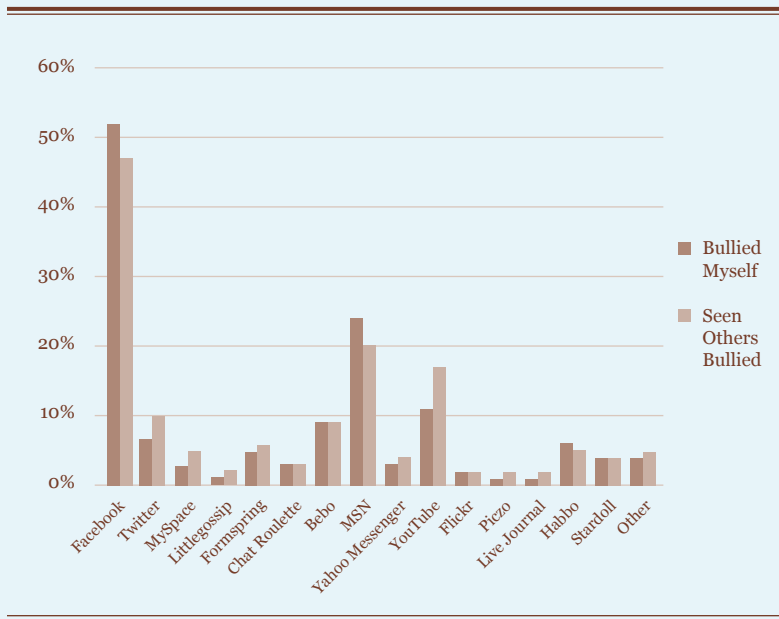
With regards to the level of cyberbullying experienced by different groups of young people, there were significant and notable differences. When looking at pupil’s experience of cyberbullying in relations to Special Educational Needs (SEN), those who reported having SEN were 12% more likely to have experienced cyberbullying than those who did not. Similarly, pupils who

reported being young carers were 12.5% more likely to have experienced cyberbullying compared to those who were not, whilst those receiving Free School Meals (FSM) were 3% more likely to have experienced cyberbullying. Even more alarmingly, those who reported having a disability were nearly twice as likely to have experienced cyberbullying (by 18.1% percentage points) than those who did not report having a disability. These findings clearly demonstrate that there are particular at 'high risk' groups of young people who are more vulnerable to being cyberbullied than others.

In terms of the platforms where cyberbullying is taking place, over half (52%) cited Facebook and a quarter (24%) cited the MSN Messenger service as the most common. Reinforcing the validity of these findings, Facebook and MSN were also cited as the most common platforms on which children witness bullying happening to others (47% and 20% respectively), and alarmingly 12% had witnessed some form of cyberbullying in the past couple of weeks, suggesting how commonplace it is. This represents a shift from our original study, which found MSN and Bebo to be the most often cited. This can partly be attributed to the change in popularity of some social networking sites, notably the phenomenal increase in popularity of Facebook among teens and adolescents.

Smaller proportions indicated that they had been bullied via Bebo (9%), Habbo (6%) and MySpace (4%). A further 3% said that they were bullied on Yahoo Messenger and 6% cited Formspring; 4% were bullied on Stardoll, 3% Chat Roulette, and 1% Littlegossip. These findings are interesting because several of these websites have emerged in the past two years and are increasingly becoming popular among the intended target audience.

Just over one-in-10 (11%) indicated that they had been bullied via YouTube, while 17% had witnessed bullying there. Likewise, 7% indicated that they had been bullied via Twitter, while 10% had seen bullying happen here. Given Twitter's only very recent rise in popularity – it did not feature in the 2009 survey – and its hitherto disassociation with cyberbullying – these are quite high figures, and provide a timely reminder that we need to be aware of all platforms where young people are interacting and where cyberbullying might be taking place.



We acknowledge that the popularity and usage of some of the websites highlighted in the study varies and has changed since 2009, but our survey looked at experiences in the past as well as now. These findings are valuable in testing the hypothesis that bullying varies between websites because of the functionality, intended audience, and purpose of the website. Crucially, where regulation and moderation are present and effective, fewer incidents of cyberbullying occur.

Of those young people who reported being cyberbullied, just over a quarter said that the experience was ongoing, meaning that the individual described it as continuous bullying by the same person or group over a sustained period of time. This would suggest that one-in-13 children are persistently cyberbullied. Given that there are approximately 4,377,780 secondary-aged children in the UK (ONS, 2011), this figure can be extrapolated to suggest that 350,222 children have experienced insidious bullying inflicted via technology. Importantly, rather than deciding ourselves what level of intensity constitutes persistent cyberbullying, our survey asks the young people themselves to define their experience. In doing this we avoided prescriptive interpretations



and focused on what is crucially important: not the frequency of cyberbullying as such but the understanding of it by the victim.

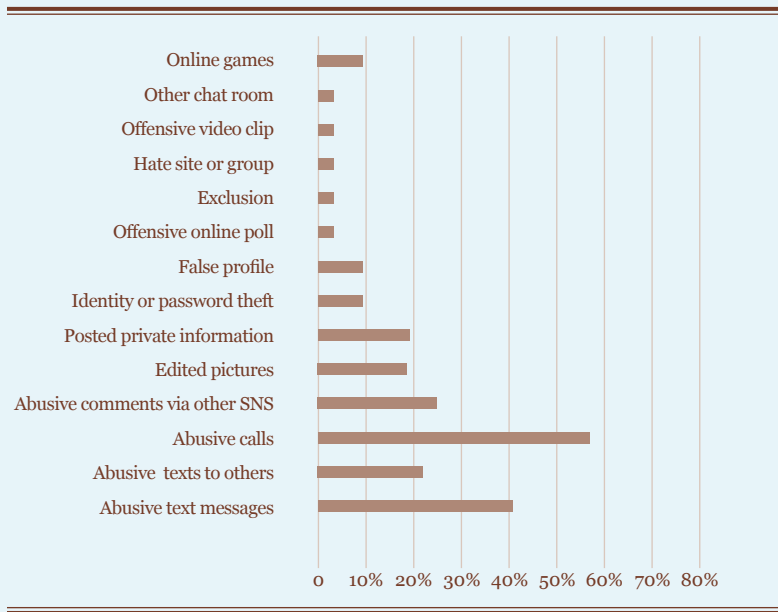
*“Being cyberbullied is such a terrible experience, it made me feel so insecure and angry. I never bothered to ask for help, I knew I wouldn’t get the right kind. I would just get annoyed and upset, as usual. I think there should be more people there to support people being bullied”. (Girl, 13)*

Children who are persistently cyberbullied endure prolonged victimisation; around a quarter (23%) of those persistently cyberbullied said it lasted for a year or more and one-fifth (19%) said that it lasted for a period of months. Persistent cyberbullying also comprises a greater number of incidents. In other words, it is both more extensive and more intensive than isolated incidents. A quarter (26%) of those persistently cyberbullied said that it happened more than 10 times, over a tenth (14%) said that the bullying happened between six and 10 times, and a third (29%) between three and five times.

The findings also present an interesting insight into where the bullying originates. For those ‘persistently cyberbullied’, a quarter (26%) said that the bullying first happened online, but 44% said that it started offline (that is, the person was first targeted face-to-face and the bullying then continued online). While this indicates that ‘persistent cyberbullying’ still tends to originate offline and then follows the victim online, there is a notable decrease in how often this is occurring when compared to the original Virtual Violence study carried out in 2009 – which found two-thirds (62%) of those who were ‘persistently cyberbullied’ were first bullied offline. Indeed, within the total sample of those who had experienced cyberbullying, only two-in-five (20%) said that their experience was an extension of offline bullying, with a quarter (27%) saying that the bullying they had experienced had started online. Therefore, this would indicate that bullying is becoming an increasingly more common phenomenon that starts online, paving the way for more relentless attacks.

### **Teachers’ and Educational Professionals’ Findings**

Of the teachers questioned, three-quarters (77%) had dealt with a case of cyberbullying, and the average number of cyberbullying cases which respondents had dealt with in total was 13. Regarding the types of incidents being dealt with, abusive and malicious comments posted via a social networking site (67%) and abusive and malicious text messages (54%) were the most common forms of bullying being reported.



The vast majority of cyberbullying coverage pertains to child-on-child bullying. 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.

However, cyberbullying is not just a problem for children and young people, but for adults as well, and in particular teachers. Our findings reveal that one-in-10 teachers report being harassed, and nearly half (48%) have witnessed it happening to their colleagues. Given that there are 198,800 secondary school teachers in England (DfE, 2011) this figure can be extrapolated to suggest that 19,880 may well have been subject to this form of harassment.

In our survey, nearly all (90%) of respondents reported it as an isolated incident arising out of something that happened within the school. Over a third (36%) were victimised via Facebook, while a quarter (27%) via RateMyTeachers.com. Regarding the types of incidents reported, comments via a social networking profile (30%) and having a hate site or group set up against them (12%) were the two most common. By contrast, abusive telephone calls (6%), text messages (3%) and video clips (3%) were less common. Aspects

of teaching style or appearance were the key motivations for the cyberbullying (33% and 21%). In some instances, the material contained threats (21%), false allegations (9%), and inappropriate sexualised content (3%).

## **‘Sexting’ and Sexual Bullying**

*“An ex boyfriend hacked into my computer and monitored everything I did. He also stole my social networking passwords and would text me hurtful messages whenever I tried to change my password. He sent me texts telling me things I had to do”. (Girl, 16)*

The issue of ‘sexting’ and sexual bullying is extremely important in the online child protection context and needs to be considered because of its potentially devastating impact on the children affected. The trend of sharing sexual content by mobile phone is not necessarily harmful, depending on the context – taking into account factors such as age and the relationship between the people involved – but it can also be extremely abusive, and the recognition that children and young people can be sexually victimised by other young people as well as adults is reshaping our understanding of the abuser-victim paradigm. Children creating and sharing sexualised content via mobile phones or the internet (sexting) and among their peer groups is one of the key ways in which children are exposed to and engaged in pornography. These behaviours are often implicated in patterns of bullying with messages and images being elicited in a coercive context, used as blackmail or circulated beyond the intended recipient.

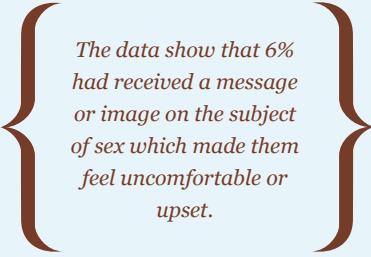
*“Someone added me on MSN, I accepted to ask who they were, but they started saying dirty things to me, telling me to go on webcam, telling me that I was really pretty, telling me all about his privates, things that I didn’t want to know, this is made me really upset and stressed so I did things to myself to take my mind of it”. (Girl, 13)*

In 2009, our research encompassing the views of over 2,000 children from across the UK found that a third of children have received a message, whilst a quarter had received an image, on the subject of sex (Cross et al, 2009). While a small proportion of these ‘sexts’ were from an unknown source, spam or an adult, the vast majority were from peers of the opposite sex.

Our latest research explores this phenomenon in more depth and focuses

on the intensity of exposure to such inappropriate content and the degree of harm caused by it. The data show that 6% had received a message or image on the subject of sex which made them feel uncomfortable or upset. Making a distinction between content that made the recipient feel uncomfortable or upset and sexual content per se allowed the respondents to foreground their own interpretation of the behaviour and avoids assuming that any form of sexual communication between young people is necessarily bad or a problem. We are aware that this, like any interaction between people, exists on a spectrum from the normal and healthy to the extremely destructive.

Of those who had received a message or image on the subject of sex which made them feel uncomfortable or upset, two-in-five (43%) had received this message via text, a quarter (26%) via social networking sites and



*The data show that 6% had received a message or image on the subject of sex which made them feel uncomfortable or upset.*

21% via picture message. Over half (54%) knew the person who was sending them messages, while just over a third (35%) did not. Out of those who knew the person sending these messages over 80% said it was a peer of the opposite sex. This finding illustrates that this type of harassment is overwhelmingly a form of bullying between peers – that is, young people of roughly the same age – rather than predatory behaviour by adults. While the latter is still a serious concern, this behaviour by same-age peers can be just as threatening, predatory and destructive.

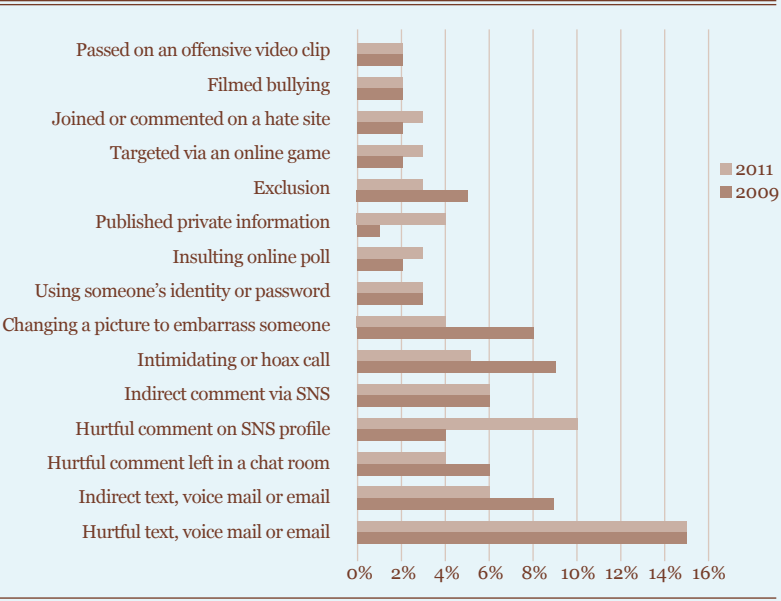
In the teachers' survey, over half (54%) were aware of pupils creating and sharing sexually explicit messages and images via the internet or mobile phones. Reassuringly, the vast majority (94%) felt completely or reasonably equipped to handle such cases. However, 6% were not very confident at all, illustrating the fact that training and education needs to be provided to all in this area.

## 2. Who are the perpetrators of cyberbullying and harassment?

### Children and Young People’s Findings

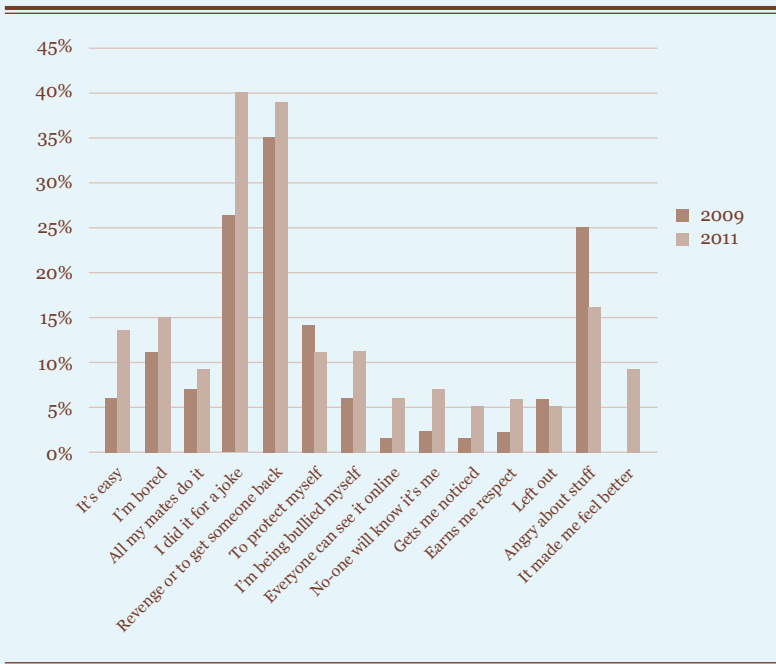
This study reveals a significant reduction in the percentage of children reporting cyberbullying others: from 33% in 2009 to 17% in 2011. Although this is not conclusive evidence to show that the number of incidents of cyberbullying is decreasing, it may suggest that cyberbullying is becoming increasingly recognised as socially unacceptable. The reduction in children reporting victimising others might reflect a change in attitude towards how comfortable children feel in “admitting” to cyberbullying others. It may be that children are still cyberbullying others, but feel more reluctant to state doing so, as the act of cyberbullying is more socially unacceptable. These positive changes might be partly attributed to increase in work across organisations and communities to tackle the problem.

The most common acts of cyberbullying were as follows: sending someone text messages intended to hurt their feelings or to make fun of them or scare them (15%), and posting comments on a social networking profile that could



have hurt their feelings or scared them (10%). Smaller proportions indicated that they posted a picture of someone online to make fun of them (4%), set up a hate site about them (3%) and posted a video clip that made fun of them or showed them being bullied (3%).

A wide variety of responses were given when we asked why they had engaged in cyberbullying behaviour, ranging from 39% who indicated that they did it for revenge to a quarter (26%) who did it for a joke. Interestingly, 16% did it because they were ‘angry about stuff’ and 15% said they did it because they were bored. The responses give an insight into perceptions of, and attitudes towards, cyberbullying. It is noticeable that, when comparing the findings with those from 2009, more young people bully others online because it is “easy”, because they can “get away with it” or because “everyone can see it online”. On a positive note, fewer young people described their behaviour as “a joke”. In all cases, it is crucial that we understand the reasons why young people chose to cyberbully, so that we can work to change those behaviours – or for those who do it because they are being bullied themselves or to protect themselves, so that we can intervene earlier.



Further insights into the identity of the aggressors can be taken from the responses of those who reported being cyberbullied: four out of five (80%) knew the identity of the person targeting them. Expanding on this, nearly three quarters knew the person in question in the offline world; 5% knew who it was but had never met them in person and 5% knew them only online. Where the incident occurred more than once or twice, a third (32%) said it was the same person or people who bullied them consistently, while 11% said that different people were involved in each incident and four-in-ten (43%) indicating that they were bullied by a consistent core of the same people with others joining in at different times. This indicates the particularly destabilising nature of cyberbullying, with its potential to involve limitless numbers of known and unknown aggressors at different points.

### Teachers' and Educational Professionals' Findings

The vast majority of teachers who were victimised (73%) reported being targeted by pupils at their school, which is unsurprising given that aspects of teaching style or appearance and false allegations were cited as key motivations for the cyberbullying.

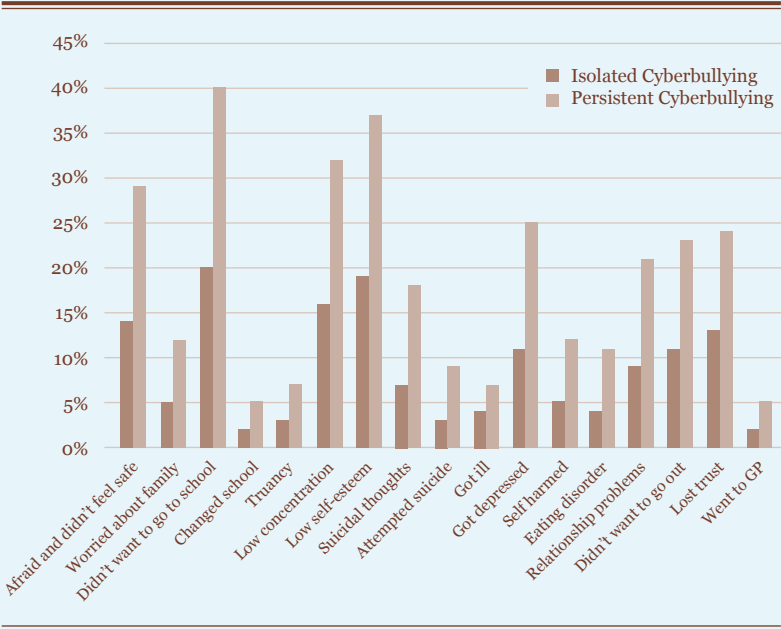
It is not just young people, however, who are the perpetrators of cyberbullying. Interestingly, parents of pupils were cited as aggressors by 11% of teachers, indicating that parents are using the internet and social media as a platform to voice frustrations, pursue vendettas or simply to be malicious. Other teaching staff, ex-pupils, or pupils from another school were cited by 10%, also highlighting how cyberbullying transcends geographical locations, with the perpetrators sometimes not even originating from the target's own school.

### 3. What are the consequences of cyberbullying and harassment?

#### Children and Young People’s Findings

The emotional and behavioural consequences of cyberbullying are significant. Feelings of isolation, low confidence and poor academic attainment are common effects on children who experience cyberbullying. In its most extreme manifestation children report self-harm and even attempting suicide.

In our survey, 20% of those cyberbullied indicated that fear of the bullies made them reluctant to go to school, 19% experienced reduced confidence and self-esteem and 14% did not feel safe. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, 11% felt depressed, 5% self-harmed and 3% attempted suicide. These feelings were amplified among children who reported persistent cyberbullying. For example, children who were persistently cyberbullied were two times more likely to say that they didn’t want to go to school compared to those who reported isolated incidents. The following chart illustrates this pattern, providing a comparison between general and persistent cases of cyberbullying:





*“It was awful. I didn’t eat much at all because I felt that I had to change for people. I had to make new friends and old friends turned on me for what other people have said about me. I went through hell and would love some of my old friends back”. (Girl, 13)*

## Teachers’ and Educational Professionals’ Findings

The consequences of cyberbullying for teachers can be broken down into a number of categories. Primarily, there are the human consequences for the individual teachers who are victimised, and then there is the negative impact on the school climate when teachers feel demoralised, undermined and threatened in their place of work. This has implications for the wider society when dedicated and talented professionals leave teaching or are put off entering the profession due to bullying or the fear of bullying.

Our survey findings reveal that as a consequence of being cyberbullied, teachers felt afraid for their safety or that of their family (15%), felt mentally and emotionally violated (9%) or said that their teaching suffered as a result of lost competence/confidence (6%). In addition, 3% contemplated leaving the teaching profession and 3% resigned altogether.

*“The teacher concerned was an NQT. I made a decision not to tell her because I did not want to cause her stress. It was the correct decision because she never found out. Whilst it was taking place I found it very stressful. It made me question my competence and practice i.e. were the comments due to the lack of trust in me to resolve issues in school? On reflection I realise that perhaps what was expressed as a verbal grievance amongst parents is now likely to be voiced on line and once in print seems to escalate.”*

*Assistant Head Teacher from a school in West Sussex*

Of no less importance are the consequences to the school with respect to the time, energy and resources spent dealing with cases of cyberbullying. Not only are teachers subject to this form of harassment, but they are also dealing with cases involving their pupils. Three quarters (77%) of teachers surveyed had dealt with a case of cyberbullying involving one of their pupils. On average, teachers have dealt with 13 cases of cyberbullying .

The majority of cases (72%) were reported by the person being victimised, nearly two-thirds (62%) were reported by parents of the pupils being victimised and 41% were reported by other students, 39% were reported by other staff, over a quarter (28%) by peer mentors at the school, and, surprisingly, 13%

were reported by the police, highlighting the amount of police time spent dealing with cases of cyberbullying and harassment.

Our findings show that on average, these nominated teachers are spending six hours per week dealing with cases of cyberbullying among their pupils. Most time is spent dealing with the repercussions in terms of managing behaviour, investigating incidents and reporting incidents. The economic cost of dealing with cases of cyberbullying is therefore significant. We estimate that nearly £18 million of the education budget may be spent on dealing with cases of cyberbullying each year (see Appendix 1). Although this calculation is based on a broad and conservative set of assumptions, the economic costs coupled with human cost and damaging consequences are an immediate priority in intervention terms.

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<sup>1</sup> These figures should be treated with a degree of caution due to the methodology used to derive them; we asked schools to nominate either the member of staff best placed to respond to a survey on bullying or a member of the school's senior management team; we might assume that the respondents were therefore the teachers most likely to have dealt with most incidents across the whole school.

## 4.

## How to prevent cyberbullying and harassment

### Children and Young People's Findings

*“People outside of school would throw things at me, and trip me up and make vile accusations about me. They would start rumours that would follow me all through the school. People would stare at me in P.E. class and online, people would make Facebook pages against bisexuals, claiming I was the inventor. I would have blogs written about me that everyone would comment on. It was horrifying. I told no one until my friends found out and went to a teacher”.*

*(Girl, 15)*

Responses to cyberbullying by victims vary widely from passive (e.g. ignoring the message) to proactive (directly acting to deal with the problem). Of the respondents, 27% ignored the message and hoped it would go away, 21% deleted the message and 9% responded to the cyberbullying by spending less time online.

Although, in comparison to 2009, fewer young people are dealing with cyberbullying by ignoring or deleting messages, it is still concerning that these remain among the most common tactics used, despite public awareness campaigns and messaging from many sources advising against such action. Alarming, 6% of respondents felt forced to change their number, email address and profile in an attempt to stop the cyberbullying, and 4% reported it to the police – perhaps indicating the seriousness of the incidents and an increase in expectation, or need, for law enforcement to intervene.

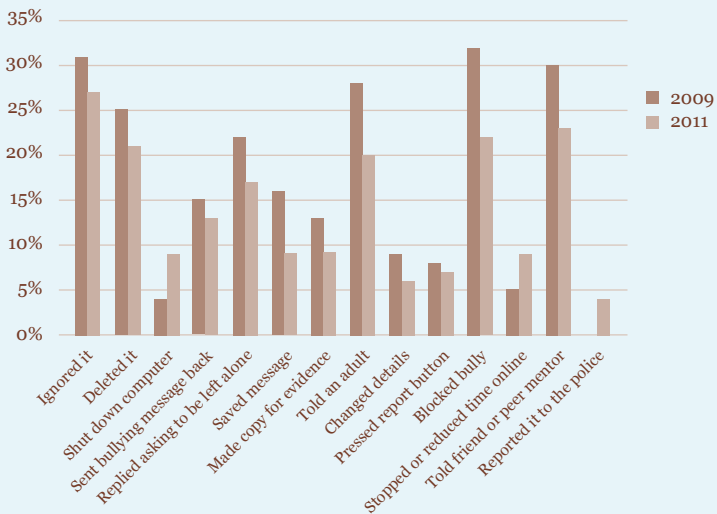
On a slightly more positive note, children do seek help by telling someone when they are cyberbullied, and some do take the recommended actions for dealing with incidents of cyberbullying, but these numbers remain low. Only one in five (20%) of those cyberbullied saved the message, copied it or printed it for evidence, and 22% took action to block the person who was sending them messages. Perhaps of more concern is that both these figures are lower than in 2009, suggesting that some of the messaging on cyberbullying and e-safety, promoted by many stakeholders, including Government, internet service providers and social networking sites, is not reaching the right audience and having the required impact.

It is also extremely concerning that in comparison to 2009, fewer victims of cyberbullying are reporting it to either a friend or an adult, and that the number

of children seeking support in this way is quite low. However, when children do seek help, it is interesting to note that friends and peers continue to be the network of support that they most commonly refer to. Of the respondents in this study, 23% told a friend or peer, whilst only 10% told a teacher or member of staff at their school, and 20% told a parent or another adult.

Disappointingly, only 7% reported the incident to the network provider. This figure is perhaps the most concerning, as it indicates that the efforts of the industry, encouraging users to report incidents directly to the service provider, are not working.

From these findings, it is clear that we need to refocus and perhaps double our efforts in terms of education and awareness raising, as the efforts to date do not appear to have had a positive effect on how children and young people seek to deal with cyberbullying.



The effectiveness of the different tactics used to deal with the cyberbullying also yields interesting results. Overall, 62% indicated that their response helped to stop the bullying.

The methods with the highest success rates in stopping the bullying were pressing the report button and blocking the person who was sending the messages, at 67% and 63% respectively – both positive, proactive steps recommended by all the e-safety authorities to deal with bullying.

Other proactive responses also return encouraging success rates in stopping the bullying – telling a peer mentor works in 57% of cases, and is as effective as telling a member of school staff. This is important, considering that when children do tell someone about their experience, they are more likely to turn to one of their peers. Telling a parent or other adult about the bullying was successful in 61%, perhaps as a sign that cyberbullying is not just a schools-based issue, and outside of school, telling a parent should be seen as an important part of dealing with cyberbullying.

Sending a rude or aggressive retaliatory message to the bully had a success rate of 61%. It could be that in cases where the initial bullying behaviour was not overtly intended as such – where it was perhaps more boredom-related, intended as a ‘joke’ or just to get a reaction – an angry response might shock or scare the person into backing down. However, although this method is reported as working to stop the bullying in certain cases, it is also a clear risk for escalating aggression and shows that more needs to be done in educating young people about positive online behaviour.

Encouragingly, more respondents reported sending an assertive message back to the perpetrator telling them to leave them alone than responded with aggression; and reassuringly, this had a similar success rate (55%). In addition, the recommended step of saving the bullying message for evidence had almost the same success rate as deleting it, at 58% and 60% respectively.

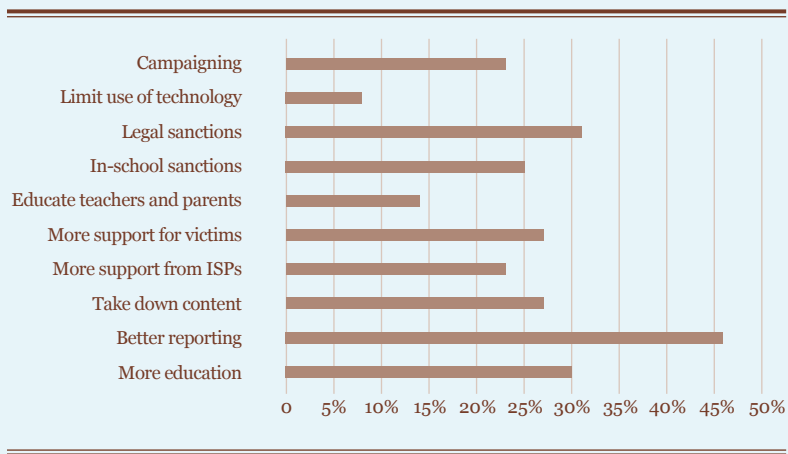
Ignoring the behaviour only succeeded in stopping the cyberbullying 50% of the time. Where this method worked, it could be due to those bullies seeking attention being disappointed and giving up or moving on to another target due to the lack of a reaction. Relatively few respondents reported changing their online details or reducing the time they spent online as responses to bullying; these are also the actions with the lowest success rates, at 49% and 43% respectively.

### Children’s recommendations:

The final finding in this section relates to children’s recommendations on preventing cyberbullying. Overall, nearly half (45%) felt that websites do not do enough to protect children. Only 8% called for schools to limit the use of technology by pupils; on the other hand, two-in-five (46%) called for better

reporting mechanisms and a third called for more education generally in this area (30%). This would indicate that technological solutions alone would not best solve the problem of cyberbullying and that schools and organisations must continue to work to educate children more about the safe use of the internet.

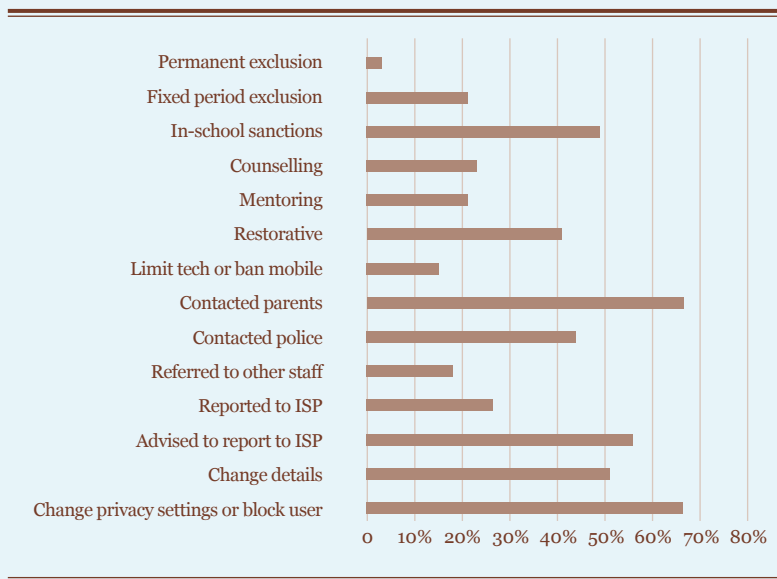
*“People think that they can say whatever they want to behind a computer screen... It needs to be reported much more than it is as it really affects young people, it has definitely shaped who I am today”. (Girl, 17)*



### Teachers’ and Educational Professionals’ Findings

Teachers’ advice to pupils experiencing cyberbullying varied widely. The most common course of action by teachers was to advise the person on how to change their privacy settings or block people from contacting them, cited by nearly two thirds (67%). This was closely followed by contacting the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the pupils involved (67%) and advising the person to report it to the network provider, cited by more than half (56%). Over half (51%) advised the pupil to change their details, such as their username or password and a further half (49%) resulted in in-school sanctions for the aggressor such as detention or isolation. Interestingly, 44% reported the incident to the police and 41% took a restorative justice approach, arranging a meeting between the bullied pupil and their aggressor. A quarter (26%) reported it to the website or

service provider themselves, 23% referred the pupils involved to a counsellor and 21% referred the pupils involved to a peer mentoring scheme, 21% resulted in a fixed period exclusion for the aggressor and 3% resulted in permanent exclusion for the aggressor.



Although among the least common responses, the most successful by a significant margin was referring the incident to another member of staff: this had a success rate of stopping the bullying in 71% of cases. In-school sanctions and fixed-period exclusions for the aggressors in cyberbullying incidents both worked 63% of the time.

Reporting incidents to the police and to the parents of the pupils involved worked 59% and 58% of the time respectively.

The most successful advice-based responses – telling pupils how to report the incident to the ISP or how to change their privacy settings and block people – worked in 59% and 58% of cases respectively. Interestingly, however, when teachers reported the incident to the ISP themselves, the success rate dropped to 50%, while the advice to pupils to change their online details also worked only half of the time.

Banning mobile internet technology from the school or classroom was

successful in half of cases, although this was by far the least popular solution, and deemed to be ineffective, from a young person's perspective. More positively, referring the pupils involved to a peer mentoring scheme also worked 50% of the time, and referrals to counselling worked in 44% of cases.

From this, it appears that proactive, assertive and authoritative (not authoritarian) approaches by teachers are the most effective in stopping cyberbullying. These approaches are characterised by a sound basis of knowledge and understanding, a framework of clear, consistent boundaries defining acceptable behaviour, and appropriate sanctions for overstepping them.

*“Facebook does not remove offensive groups bullying adults. It is impossible to contact them to explain all you can do is report the group”.*

*(Secondary School Teacher, Bristol)*

The most common action taken by teachers in response to cyberbullying against them by pupils was some form of in-school sanctions against the aggressor, such as detention, which was used in 56% of cases and had a reported success rate of 78% in stopping the behaviour. Informing the parents of those involved was a less common choice at 21%, and was successful in 58% of cases. Avoiding or deregistering from the platforms where the harassment was taking place worked 57% of the time, closely followed by spending less time online (56%). Talking directly with the pupils involved was the action taken in just over a quarter (26%) of cases, with success reported in half of them; fixed-period exclusion, a higher-level and more serious step than school-based sanctions, was used in 3% of reported cases and successful in half of these. Although seeking help from a union was reported as a response to cyberbullying at exactly the same rate (26%), the success rate of this action in stopping the bullying was only 38%, and deleting the material – an action which 21% of cyberbullied teachers report taking – yielded exactly the same low figure. Planned lessons and assemblies on the subject (12%) and sending a politely worded message back to the aggressor telling them to stop (6%) yielded no reported success.

These findings present a mixture of disheartening and encouraging evidence – although the relatively small sample size for this respondent group means that these figures are an indication of patterns and may not be entirely representative. It is perhaps disappointing that education-based responses, such as lessons on cyberbullying, had no reported efficacy for these incidents against teachers, and that approaching unions for help had such a low level



of success; it is also potentially concerning that the approaches which seem in a sense to re-victimise the victim – avoiding or deregistering from the platforms where the bullying occurred; spending less time online – report a relatively high rate of effectiveness.

However, the success of school-based sanctions and informing parents of cyberbullying pupils could be an indication that authoritative methods work in establishing or clarifying the boundaries of acceptable behaviour when dealing with incidents of teachers being cyberbullied by pupils.

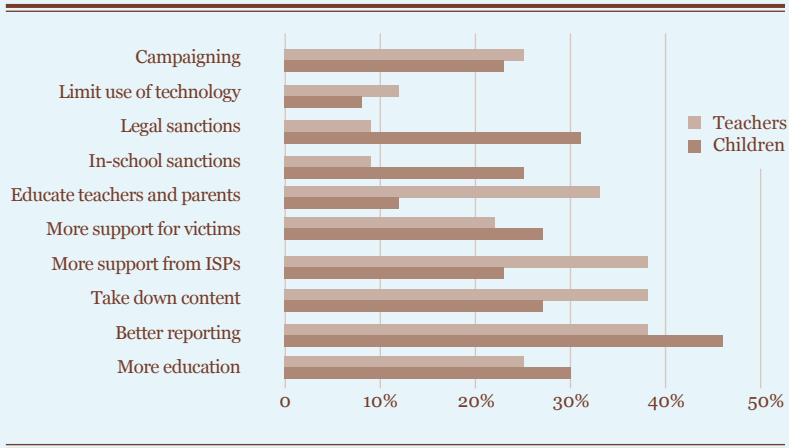
*In sum, both groups call for more responsibility on the part of ISPs and more education for pupils, teachers and parents.*

#### Teachers' recommendations:

As with the children and young people, we asked teachers to recommend solutions to address the problem. Teachers also felt that websites should be doing more for the safety of their service users (38%) – the most common single category of response. On the other hand, a third (33%) called for more education and training for teachers, a third (32%) called for more education among parents and a quarter (25%) called for more education among pupils. The table below provides a comparison between children's and teachers' recommendations. In sum, both groups call for more responsibility on the part of ISPs and more education for pupils, teachers and parents. By contrast, both groups felt that reducing technology and confiscating mobiles was not the best solution. This would suggest that both groups agree with the view that cyberbullying is not merely a technological problem but also one rooted in behaviour. Thus, all are in agreement that education is the key to finding a solution to the problem.

*“More support to parents and education in school, lots of schools block sites and don't teach students how to use safely”.*  
*(Secondary School Teacher, Greenwich)*

The below chart is a comparison between children's and teachers' responses.



## Recommendations

It is clear from this research that cyberbullying continues to be a dangerous problem for a significant number of young people. Following on from the first Virtual Violence study in 2009, our findings do not show a demonstrable decline in the extent to which young people are encountering and sharing harmful or threatening content via digital technology. In addition, the consequences of this form of bullying are just as pronounced as two years ago and are just as detrimental to the child, the school and wider society. As only two years have passed, many of the recommendations made in the first Virtual Violence report still stand.

Whilst it is acknowledged that some progress is being made, continual advances and changes in technology and the way it is being used by young people present new challenges. Our findings in this report also highlight the impact of cyberbullying on teachers, and begin to reveal some of the associated issues that present themselves within educational settings. It emphasises the important role of the school, both in preventing and dealing with cyberbullying, and perhaps suggests where some of our focus must be in the coming years.

What is clear is that we need to take responsibility for both preventing cyberbullying and dealing effectively with incidents when they occur. This responsibility sits with many different stakeholders, as we must look at both the behaviour as well as the technology being used, or abused, to facilitate the behaviour. As technological advances are made, it is essential that we place sufficient focus on using technological solutions to prevent harmful incidents taking place, as well as ensuring that our policies and education in the offline world are current and responsive to the changing issues and behaviours that are taking place online.

As such, we propose the following recommendations and policy reforms:

- 1. Service Providers (e.g. social networking sites, mobile phone networks) must do more to protect their users and to respond to incidents of cyberbullying that take place via their service**

Both pupils and teachers believe that service providers and websites need to do more to protect their users. In line with the key recommendations of the first Virtual Violence report, in Beatbullying's view, networks and Internet Service

Providers still need to take more responsibility to protect children online, and respond more effectively to incidents of cyberbullying.

While some progress has been made and a number of providers have begun to communicate more in this area, further considerable changes still need to be made in terms of how these types of networks moderate material posted, remove inappropriate material posted, and signpost users to effective, immediate sources of support. As incidents of cyberbullying are not usually dealt with by criminal sanctions and tend furthermore to move between different technologies, it is not possible to propose a purely technical solution to this problem. Nevertheless, the providers of online and digital technologies can and should be doing more to limit children's exposure to inappropriate content online.

In particular, we recommend:

- Clearer and simpler reporting mechanisms, especially where a service is marketed and provided to children, making it easier for users to report cyberbullying
- Improved transparency and communication of protocols followed when reports of cyberbullying are made, including average response times, so that relevant stakeholders know what to expect and users reporting cyberbullying are able to know the timescale for action with regards to when and if the problem will be dealt with and if and when the content will be removed
- Increased moderation of user generated content, possibly through a skilled third party. This moderation is especially important where a service is proactively promoted and used by children
- Prominent signposting to sources of expertise, advice, support and help for children and young people affected by cyberbullying
- Independent monitoring of a voluntary code of practice for industry, with the results promoted to parents and children.

**2. Service providers must work more closely with the organisations dealing with the consequences and aftermath of cyberbullying that is taking place through their services, providing both support and funding**

Children and young people who experience cyberbullying seek support; support that is not, and cannot be delivered by the service providers themselves, but

by external agencies. Internet service providers, social networking sites and mobile phone networks, must therefore support and provide funding to those services that intervene and offer help to their users who have been cyberbullied.

### **3. All schools must develop and implement an anti-bullying strategy that includes practical measures to prevent and deal with incidents of cyberbullying**

The 2010 Schools White Paper indicated that certain powers and responsibilities would be devolved directly to individual schools, including devolved responsibility for anti-bullying work. Increasing the authority of teachers to discipline pupils, improving exclusion processes and empowering head teachers to take a strong stand against bullying is important. Establishing a culture of respect and safety, with zero tolerance of bullying, is of equal importance.

We recommend:

- A designated teacher (within the Senior Leadership Team) responsible for anti-bullying work, who is in charge of the programmatic implementation and oversight of the school's bullying prevention and intervention plan
- Procedures and mechanisms for the recording and reporting of incidents of bullying, including cyberbullying
- Cyberbullying to be included and referenced in all behaviour, anti-bullying and acceptable use policies
- All teachers to be given training, support and guidance in dealing with bullying, including cyberbullying, so that they can better identify, resolve, and prevent incidents concerning children in their care
- More education programmes, specifically focusing on cyberbullying.

The change in the Ofsted inspection framework, to *“focus more strongly on behaviour and safety, including bullying, as one of four key areas of inspections”* should provide an external assessment of how well a school is tackling bullying. This needs to include cyberbullying and survey effective and ineffective practices that address the problem.

### **4. Campaigns to raise awareness and educate young people about how to respond and deal with incidents of cyberbullying need to be re-focused**

There remains a significant number of young people who do not take sufficient action when responding to, or dealing with, incidents of cyberbullying. Despite much publicised efforts from internet service providers and mobile phone providers amongst others, promoting advice to users on how to protect themselves from cyberbullying, the messaging does not appear to have had significant impact. Indeed, when young people are cyberbullied, fewer numbers are reporting it to the service provider in comparison to 2009, and fewer are following the recommended actions of telling someone, blocking the perpetrator, and saving the evidence. For example, the current signposting to help centres or webpages within social networking sites do not appear to having a significant impact in the numbers of young people following the recommended actions and reporting their incidents of cyberbullying.

All stakeholders, including Government, service providers and internet safety organisations, should re-examine and assess the impact of their existing strategies and campaigns to keep children safe online. The Government should revisit its child internet safety strategy, Click Clever, Click Safe, launched in December 2009, as well as measure the impact of other campaigns. Efforts in these areas must be re-doubled, with the necessary changes made to successfully reach children and young people with the right messages that will keep them safe.

Much has been done by Third Sector organisations, both in their own campaigns and programmes, as well as in supporting those of others, but they cannot act alone in this. Efforts in these areas must be re-doubled, with the necessary changes made if we are to successfully reach children and young people with the right messages that will keep them safe.

## **5. Government must continue to recognise the damage caused by bullying, and support proven anti-bullying programmes**

Beatbullying is adamant that if innovative anti-bullying programmes are adequately resourced, then more groups of children can be educated and negative behaviour further redirected to constructive ends.

## About Beatbullying

Beatbullying is the UK's leading bullying prevention charity working to create a world where bullying, violence and harassment are unacceptable. Beatbullying empowers people to understand, recognise and say no to bullying, violence and harassment by giving them the tools to transform their lives and the lives of their peers. We work with families, schools and communities to understand the problem, campaign for change and provide sustainable, efficient and proven solutions.

Beatbullying is proud to be funded by the DfE to protect and empower children against bullying through our delivery of CyberMentors ([www.cybermentors.org.uk](http://www.cybermentors.org.uk)). CyberMentors are young people who are trained to mentor other young people – both on and offline – who have problems related to their wellbeing, particularly around bullying. If the severity of the issue makes it necessary, CyberMentors are trained to refer high-level issues to our British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP)-accredited counsellors. We have found this online model of service provision a particular success in helping children overcome the difficulties that they encounter. The programme has been fully and independently evaluated by academic organisations and institutions such as the University of Sussex, Goldsmiths, University of London, New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), and the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes for Children's and Young People's Services (C4EO). Our flagship CyberMentors programme has recently been accredited as an example of "fully validated" practice under the C4EO Early Intervention theme.

## About NAHT

NAHT is an independent trade union and professional association with 28,500 members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Members include head teachers, deputies, assistant head teachers, bursars and school business managers. They hold leadership positions in early years, primary, special, secondary and independent schools, sixth form colleges, outdoor education centres, pupil referral units, social services establishments and other educational settings. The membership represents 85 per cent of primary and 40 per cent of secondary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



## About Nominet Trust

Nominet Trust is passionate about the internet's potential to empower people to shape the world, their communities and their own lives. From unemployment to social isolation, technology offers us opportunities to design radically different solutions to big social challenges. This is why we bring together, invest in and support people committed to creating a safe, accessible internet used to make society better. Since our inception in 2008, we have invested over £10 million in organisations as wide-ranging as Age UK and ChildNet, the Alzheimer's Society and the Oxford Internet Institute as well as dozens of social enterprises. Find out more at [www.nominettrust.org.uk](http://www.nominettrust.org.uk)

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## Appendix

**Table 1: Cost of dealing with cyberbullying per year**

Statistics	£ Cost / Time Spent
Average Teacher Earning Per Annum	£36,200
Average Teaching Hours Per Week	40 Hours
Average Teaching Weeks Per Year	26 Weeks
Average Earning Per Week	£1,392.31
Average Earning Per Hour	£34.81
Average Earning Per Day	£278.46
Number of Hours Dealing with Cyberbullying	6 Hours
Weekly Cost	£208.85
Number of Weeks Per Year / Per School	£5,430.00
Number of Secondary Schools in the UK	3,310
<b>Total Cost Per Year in UK</b>	<b>£17,973,300.00</b>

*A Note on the Calculation: We have assumed that in an average secondary school there is one teacher who is allocated with dealing with a case of cyberbullying with an average salary of £36,200 (DfE, 2011a). We have also assumed that there is an average of 40 teaching hours per week with an average of 26 teaching weeks per year (pro-rata for just term time). Therefore an average teacher would earn approximately £34.81 per hour, meaning that a weekly cost of dealing with cyberbullying over the course of a year would be £208.85 and cost per year for one school would be £5,430. Considering that there are 3,310 secondary schools in the UK (DfE, 2011d). These findings would suggest that £17,973,300 is the total cost per year in England.*