

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

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Together with



At O2, we believe in the potential of young people and are proud of our heritage in supporting them on their journey into the workplace. As a leading communications company in a digital world, we think businesses need to do more to support young people, showcasing the opportunities that digital presents. This means not only helping them make the most of their digital skills, but helping them to be safe online.

Our partnership with Stonewall is the result of our commitments to young people, online safety and diversity. While all young people need guidance on how to be safe online, Stonewall's research has shown that young lesbian, gay and bisexual people can be even more vulnerable. This guide, *Staying Safe Online*, aims to provide parents and teachers with the resources to prepare young people, particularly LGB young people, to deal with online risks. As a Director at O2 and Board Sponsor for Diversity & Inclusion, I believe we have a responsibility to help all young people stay safe online and we are proud to be working with Stonewall towards that goal.

Derek McManus

Chief Operating Officer, Telefónica O2 UK

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

<FOREWORD>

The internet gives young people unprecedented opportunities to engage with the world around them and interact with one another. The internet also plays an increasingly important part in young people's education and learning, something which many schools have been quick to grasp. For some young people, such as many lesbian, gay and bisexual people, the internet also provides a way to reach out to others having similar experiences to them, and can be a source of hope for young people who are having a hard time at school.

Unfortunately, as we're increasingly aware, the internet has a darker side. Young people are encouraged to develop an overly sexualised view of relationships as a result of the widespread prevalence of pornography and many young people are creating sexual images of themselves. Other young people find

themselves on the receiving end of homophobic abuse online or at risk of exploitation from predatory adults.

The risks for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people can be more pronounced, either because they aren't given e-safety information which explicitly addresses their concerns in school or because they're scared to raise worries for fear of being judged about their sexual orientation. That's why we've written this guide, to help parents and teachers take the very simple steps to make their e-safety work relevant to all young people, and highlight how the best schools are already doing just that. We hope that you find the guide useful, and as ever, let us know how you get on and what more we can do to help.

Ruth Hunt *Chief Executive, Stonewall*

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<INTRODUCTION>

From social networking sites to online games, videos and mobile apps, young people are spending more and more time online. The internet provides exciting ways to be creative, explore new things and connect with others. Lesbian, gay and bisexual young people use the internet for many of the same reasons as their straight peers. However, for most gay young people, the internet is also a vital source of support and information on gay issues that they aren't getting in school.

Sadly, going online can also expose young people to risks, from the increasing prevalence of online pornography to cyberbullying, grooming and exploitation. Lesbian gay and bisexual young people are no exception, but can be more vulnerable because e-safety lessons tend to take a one-size fits all approach, neglecting their experiences. For instance, lesbian gay and bisexual young people tell us that they often struggle to meet other gay people of the same age and that the internet offers them an easy, anonymous way to do this. Connecting with others like this can be a real lifeline for gay young people, but in some cases it also leads to them engaging in risk-taking behaviour. Many young people, gay and straight, create and

send sexual images of themselves without being fully aware of the consequences. But research from ChildLine and Stonewall shows that gay young people are not only more likely to create these images, but also more likely to send them to people they've only ever met online, putting themselves at risk of exploitation.

Alongside this, homophobic cyberbullying is endemic; one in four gay young people report having experienced homophobic abuse online. This abuse not only makes young people unhappy but it also impacts on their attainment, health and wellbeing. In the worst cases homophobic cyberbullying has led to self-harm and suicide.

All parents want to know their children will be safe when they go online and the best schools are already working to ensure that e-safety information is relevant to all of their pupils, regardless of sexual orientation. This guide examines some of the risks that young people face online and using the experiences of those leading schools, provides practical ways for parents and teachers to help young people stay safe.



One in four gay young people experience homophobic bullying online, making them feel unhappy and less likely to reach their full potential at school. In the worst cases, homophobic cyberbullying impacts on young people's mental health and well-being, leading to self-harm and suicide.



LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE INTERNET

This chapter looks at

- How and why lesbian, gay and bisexual young people use the internet
- The internet as a source of information about gay issues
- Why gay young people use the internet to make friends
- Internet filters blocking gay content

GETTING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Stonewall's research into the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people found that they use the internet for many of the same reasons as their straight peers. However, they are more likely to go online to look for information on some specific issues.

Gay young people often feel isolated and invisible growing up. This is largely due to the lack of openly gay role models, in schools and wider society.

More than half of gay young people don't feel there is an adult at school they can talk to about being gay and don't feel they belong at their school. One in four don't have an adult to talk to at school, home or elsewhere. *The School Report*, 2012, research by the University of Cambridge into the experiences of 1,600 lesbian, gay and bisexual young people.

They knew I couldn't tell teachers because they convinced me my sexuality would get back to my parents. Gabby, 16, single-sex secondary school (South West)

I wish there was someone I could talk to, especially a teacher.

Reena, 18, sixth form college (South East)

More than half of gay young people are never taught anything about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues at school and **85 per cent** are never taught anything about biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships.

While we did get taught about sex education, not any of it was sex education for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Because I was not out at the time, I couldn't ask.

Noah, 16, secondary school (South East)

Most gay young people also find that there is a lack of support, resources and information on gay issues at school. **More than a third** (35 per cent) report that their school library doesn't contain books or information about gay people or issues.

Even gay young people who are open about their sexual orientation can struggle to get the information and support they need. YouGov polling of more than 1000 secondary school teachers in *The Teachers' Report* 2009 found that **two in five** wouldn't feel confident providing pupils with information, advice and guidance on gay issues.

I don't know anything about my rights as a gay person, what the law says, or anything about safe sex. We discussed the controversy over gay marriage once.

Natalie, 17, secondary school (South West)

As a result, most gay young people have no information on their legal rights, same-sex relationships or gay people in 21st century Britain. Unsurprisingly, many young people are choosing to search for this information online instead, to avoid disclosing their sexual orientation.



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MAKING FRIENDS

Young people want to meet others who have similar feelings and experiences to them. Many gay young people don't get to meet other gay people and would like to socialise somewhere they can be open and feel safe. However, without support from teachers or parents, this can be difficult.

Over half of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people would like to go to a specific youth group for gay people but 72 per cent do not have access to such a group or don't know whether one exists in their area. *The School Report*, 2012

I wish there was a youth group as I would really like to meet other teens like me.

Sally, 15, secondary school (South East)

Almost a third of gay young people are ignored and isolated by other people at school.

I was alone for quite a long time, in lessons as well as during breaks. Other people only talked to me to tease me.

Megan, 16, faith secondary school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

The internet provides a way for gay young people to connect with other young people who are experiencing similar issues and can offer peer support and friendship. **Almost two thirds**, (63 per cent), of gay young people use the internet to meet other lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

Meeting strangers from the internet is extremely appealing as it doesn't share any of the threats that talking to people in your social circle has. Kevin, 17, secondary academy (South West)

While age-appropriate online friendships can be a helpful source of support, some gay young people use adult sites to meet people or unintentionally end up talking to an adult. Online friendships can also quickly lead to risk-taking behaviours, like meeting up with strangers.

FILTERS

Making the internet a safer environment for children and young people is a key government priority. Working with internet service providers, family-friendly filters have been introduced to protect young people from pornography and other inappropriate online content.

Internet filters play an important role in protecting gay young people from unsuitable or adult sites. However, many filters inadvertently block access to age-appropriate information on gay issues.

Some filters block specific categories of information such as 'violence and pornography', 'lifestyle' or 'sex education' while others block searches that include specific words and search terms. This can prevent gay pupils from accessing vital information on issues like coming out or mental and sexual health, putting their well-being at risk.

My school blocked every website which had lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans in the title so you couldn't even access the Stonewall website or look for gay youth groups. This is valuable information people are trying to access and many aren't especially comfortable accessing that kind of information from home.

Stonewall Youth Volunteer

When gay young people can't access safe, educational sites they are left without support entirely and may look elsewhere, including going to gay pubs or clubs.

Blocking sites that refer to sexual orientation can also make young people think that talking about sexual orientation or being gay is wrong or taboo.

Our school's internet service provider actively blocks most pages about Oscar Wilde and in particular his Wikipedia page, which has details of his sexuality. That seems to be the only reason that his pages are blocked.

Rachel, 17, secondary school (Scotland)

What you need to know

PARENTS AND TEACHERS

- All young people use the internet as a source of information and support, particularly lesbian, gay and bisexual young people who don't receive support or information on gay issues in school or at home.
- The internet plays an increasingly important role in young people's social lives. For gay young people, it can provide an opportunity to talk to other young people with similar feelings.
- Internet filters protect young people from inappropriate content, but sometimes block gay young people's access to sites about gay issues.

YOUNG PEOPLE

- The internet can be a great place to meet other gay people and find out more about what it means to be gay, but it needs to be used responsibly.
- Internet filters might sometimes block sites you want to access because they cover gay issues. If this is the case you can ask your teacher or parents to unblock them, or get in touch with us and we can speak to internet providers on your behalf.

<2> THE RISKS

This chapter looks at

- The dangers of misleading information on the internet
- The prevalence of sexting among gay young people
- The risks of exploitation online
- Cyberbullying and homophobic abuse online

MISLEADING INFORMATION

When young people search for information online the sites they access aren't always age-appropriate or reliable. Effective internet filters block the majority of inappropriate content. However, filters aren't foolproof and young people can find ways to bypass them.

Online searches can lead young people to misleading information that puts their health and wellbeing at risk.

I watched porn and ... a guy doing an oral sex to a guy without condom on his penis ... I don't get it. I heard doing [it] without condom gives aids. YAHOO Answers

Searches can also lead to homophobic or offensive content. A search including the terms 'gay' or 'homosexuality' could bring up anything from gay chatrooms to hate sites. Consequently, gay young people looking for support may end up feeling confused or bad about themselves.

Some young people access pornography sites and adult chatrooms to get information on sex and relationships or to explore their sexuality. Pornography exposes young people to unhealthy, sexualised portrayals of relationships and often portrays unsafe or underage sex. This is particularly damaging for gay young people who aren't taught about healthy same-sex relationships in school.

These [websites] are very sexualised and I think finding out about my sexuality in this covert online way has been a negative experience and not helped in learning to form meaningful relationships with men.

Richard, 19 (North West)

SEXTING

Sexting is the sharing of self-generated sexually explicit images, messages and videos, on mobile phones or online. Sexting is an increasingly common phenomenon amongst all young people, but particularly gay young people.

A ChildLine and Young Stonewall survey of almost 250 gay young people found that **59 per cent** had created a sexual photo or video. This compares to **40 per cent** of young people in general. **88 per cent** of gay young people said they had sent the photo or video on to someone else, compared with **78 per cent** of young people generally.

Most young people don't think sexting is a big issue and aren't aware of the dangers and risks. However, creating and sending sexually explicit images under the age of 18 is against the law and can have deeply upsetting and damaging consequences.

Why does it happen?

Sexting often takes place between young people who know each other, or are in a relationship and want to begin a sexual relationship. In this situation they may feel they can trust the other person not to circulate the image further. Sexting can also be the result of pressure from peers or online 'friends', including adults.

The ChildLine and Young Stonewall survey found that, of those gay young people who had sent a sexual photo or video, **47 per cent** sent it to someone they knew online but had never met in real life, compared to just **32 per cent** of young people generally. In addition, **just over half** of gay young people who had received an explicit image said it came from someone they only know online, compared to **30 per cent** of young people in general.

Gay young people who haven't come out sometimes feel under pressure to prove their sexual orientation and engage in sexting to avoid being picked on or bullied. A 2012 NSPCC study found that boys who refuse to engage in sexting are often called 'gay' by peers.

If they had a picture of a girl naked and you told them 'That's wrong' they will think straight away you are gay.

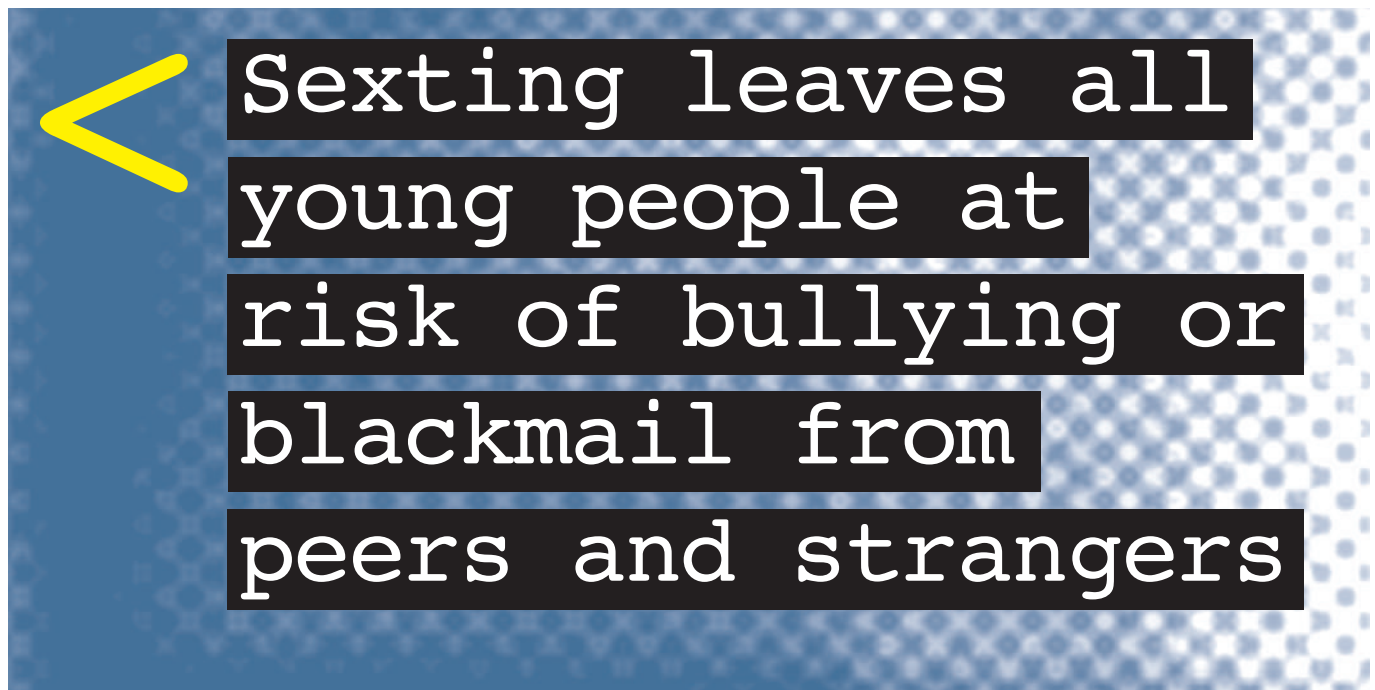
Year 10 boy, *A qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting'*, NSPCC, 2012

What are the risks?

Once a young person has sent a sexual image, it is entirely out of their control and can be passed on to others, either deliberately or accidentally.

Sexting leaves all young people at risk of bullying or blackmail from peers and strangers. Often images are shared at school or passed around on social networks. If an image a gay young person has sent to a same-sex partner becomes public, they may be 'outed', blackmailed or experience homophobic bullying, along with the humiliation of the image being shared.

Gay young people are more likely to experience mental health issues such as depression, self-harm and suicide than other young people. The distress and anxiety caused when a sexual image becomes public can trigger or exacerbate these issues.



EXPLOITATION ONLINE

Predatory adults sometimes target young people on social networking sites and chatrooms. Gay young people who use the internet to make friends may be more exposed to this risk. Exploitative relationships often begin with an adult gaining the trust of a young person. In the absence of other role models, gay young people can be drawn in by adults online, particularly if they are struggling to come out or are looking for support.

Social networking sites and chatrooms make it easy for an adult to create a fake profile and pretend to be a young person. Some gay young people are tricked into talking to adults, but others deliberately use adult sites because they think it's an easier way to meet people, explore their sexuality or feel accepted.

I got chatting with this man on Facebook and I felt so bad about myself, I opened up to him... We got into a relationship really quickly. ... He ended up raping me... After it happened, I went for a walk by the river and I climbed on

to a bridge and I freaked and I thought about jumping ... It was like 'who am I going to tell this to because they're going to think I'm sick?

Young gay male, *Running from hate to what you think is love*, Barnardo's, 2013

Gay young people can struggle to make friends in other ways, so when they do, they are more susceptible to peer pressure and risk-taking, including sexting or meeting up for sex. Sexting can be used to trap young people in exploitative relationships. Adults may threaten to share images or tell a young person's friends and family what they have done if they don't carry on talking and meeting up.

For any young person who is a victim of sexual exploitation, seeking help can be difficult, because they feel ashamed or worried that they'll get into trouble. For gay young people, having to explain their sexual orientation is an additional barrier to reporting the problem.



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CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is bullying online. It includes anything from abusive text messages, emails and comments on social networking sites to impersonating another person online or sharing their personal details.

Any young person can become the victim of cyberbullying. However, gay young people often find themselves targeted because of their sexual orientation. **One in four** lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic cyberbullying and **one in ten** are bullied by text message.

In particular cyberbullying (online messengers etc.) are a huge problem related to anti-gay bullying.

Amy, teacher, independent secondary school (North West)

Unlike other types of bullying, cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day. Cyberbullies can remain anonymous and often deliberately target others when they're in the safety of their own home, making them feel there is no escape.

Sometimes I'd get messages on Facebook from people I didn't know threatening me and telling me not to come back into school.

Will, 16, secondary school (Greater London)

In more serious cases groups of young people set up online threads or hate groups to target individuals.

Last summer, I was attacked on Facebook through a series of comments and wall posts calling me a 'fag'.

Harry, 16, single-sex private school (North West)

Homophobic bullying, whether online or in person, impacts on gay young people's self-esteem and achievement and attainment at school. Homophobic bullying can lead to more serious consequences including mental health issues, self-harm and suicide.

A 15 year old boy who was subjected to homophobic bullying by classmates both online and at school became so distressed that he attempted to take his own life by climbing on a playground structure and hanging himself. One of his friends commented, 'he was different and they tend to pick on the different ones.' **Daily Mail**, 2013

I experienced a lot of bullying at school. I contemplated suicide and attempted it enough to get me referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

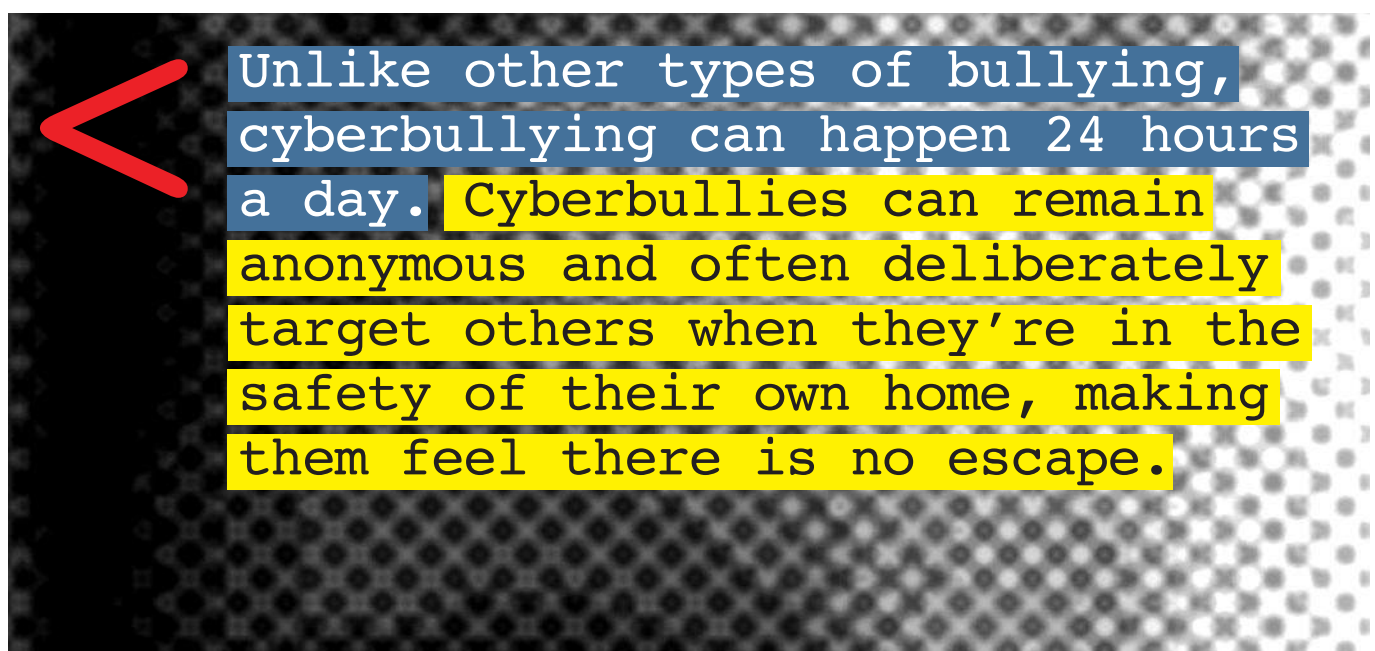
Drew, 17, sixth form college (West Midlands)

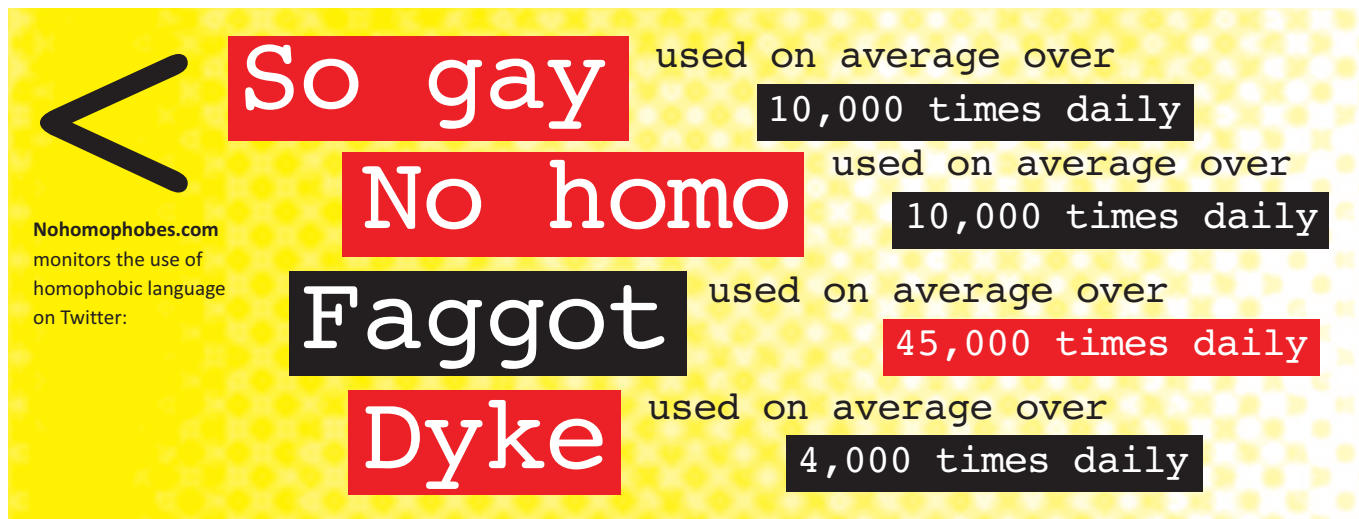
It's not just gay young people who are affected by homophobic abuse online. Any young person who is different can be a victim of homophobic bullying. Sometimes this is the result of peers starting rumours online.

Young people are often reluctant to report homophobic bullying because they don't want to be 'labelled' gay or because they haven't yet come out.

I was always too uncomfortable with my own sexuality to report any bullying.

Owen, 17, secondary school (Wales)





HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE

Homophobic language is endemic across social media and often plays a part in cyberbullying.

Told you all Tom Daley was a dirty fag! /
Tom Daley finally coming out of the closet,
should be shot, disgusting /
Did anyone actually think Tom Daley was
straight? He's a f***ing obvious a*** bandit /
You just lost a fan, go to hell!!!
faggot @TomDaley1994 /
Tom daley queer c**T!

Twitter abuse directed at Olympic diver, **Tom Daley**, who came out in a YouTube video, 2013

Use of homophobic language on social media by celebrities can make young people think this is acceptable online.

TV presenter, **Jeremy Clarkson** posted an image of himself asleep next to a piece of paper with the words 'gay c**t' written on it. January 2014

Many people who use homophobic language online don't mean to be homophobic, but seeing derogatory phrases about lesbian, gay and bisexual people constantly used online can have a real impact on young people's self-esteem.

What you need to know

PARENTS AND TEACHERS

- Reputable websites provide important information which helps young people stay safe but the internet also contains a wealth of misleading information and pornographic material which gives young people a distorted view of gay issues.
- Sexting – sharing sexual images, messages and videos – is a growing phenomenon among young people, gay and straight. Not only is sexting illegal under the age of 18, but it also leaves young people at risk of bullying and exploitation.
- When gay young people use the internet to meet other people they put themselves at risk of exploitation, particularly when using dating websites meant for adults.
- Homophobic cyberbullying and gay abuse online are endemic. This damages young people's self esteem and wellbeing.

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Some websites contain really useful information about being gay and gay issues but others are full of mistakes. It can be difficult sorting out the truth from the fiction. The Stonewall website is a good place to start.
- Even if you really like someone there are better ways to show it than sending them a sexual image. Once you send someone an image you're no longer in control of where it goes and if you're under 18 you're technically breaking the law!
- When making friends online make sure they're your age. If you run into trouble or an adult has made you feel uncomfortable, it's really important you report it to an adult you trust or CEOP.
- If you experience bullying online you should report that too. The same is true of homophobic abuse. You don't have to put up with it and if you tell them most websites will take it down.

<3> ONLINE PLATFORMS

This chapter looks at

- Popular social networking sites
- Mobiles, smartphones and apps

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Millions of young people use social networking sites like **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Myspace** every day to chat and keep in touch with friends. Young people can also create 'online profiles' by sharing information about their interests, activities, friends, likes and dislikes.

Sharing information and site settings

Making any personal details public on social networks, including phone numbers, email addresses, passwords or their school puts young people at risk. Young people are often less shy online than they would be in real life. They may decide to open up about their sexual orientation on social networking sites. If their account is public, this information is available to strangers and cyberbullies.

Twitter users usually have open profiles, meaning anyone can see their messages or 'tweets' as well as who they follow. Young people also sometimes share personal information like their school or where they live in tweets.

Sharing passwords or leaving phones unlocked can lead to situations where young people log in to each other's accounts and post offensive comments or pass around personal information. This could be particularly distressing for a young person if it reveals their sexual orientation.

Most social networking sites have age restrictions in place but there is nothing to stop someone pretending to be older. Young people can sign up to groups targeted at over 18s just by ticking a box.

Photo and video sharing

Some of the most popular social networks, including **Flickr**, **Instagram** and **YouTube**, are specifically designed for users to upload photos or videos. Young people often don't realise that once they post a video or photo, it is nearly impossible to get back and that these platforms enable content sharing so a photo they post on one network could show up on another. Young people sometimes feel uninhibited using **webcams** or sites with **video chat** not realising that footage can be recorded and saved. Adults can use webcams to coerce young people into sexual acts and, in some cases, record webcam activity to blackmail them. Equally, a young person may be exposed to sexual images sent by an adult.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SITES

Question and answer sites allow users to post and respond to questions, usually anonymously. Gay young people can see this as a safe environment to ask about gay issues. However, responses can put young people at risk or make them feel negatively about their sexual orientation.

Q: What are your views on underage gay sex?

**A: Under-age sex... bad. Gay sex... worse.
Under-age gay sex... worst.**

A: I suppose that when you consider I did it when I was underage it would be hypocritical of me to condemn it now, so as long as it's safe, and between people of similar age, then it's OK

Questions about sexual orientation sometimes elicit unsupportive, hurtful or explicitly homophobic responses.

Q: How can a 14 year old gay get a boyfriend?

A: Go to specialized gay towns and stuff

A: naff off you pansy

A: Just outing yourself may get other closeted bi and gay boys interested and they may quietly approach you and admit they also find guys very sexy

ONLINE FORUMS

Web forums that are poorly moderated or allow for anonymity often become the site of homophobic abuse or cyberbullying.

LittleGossip is a web forum where pupils can leave anonymous comments about peers and staff members. Although the site is for over 18s, there's nothing to stop younger pupils logging on. Young people use the site to call other pupils homophobic names including 'gay' 'lezza' 'fag' and 'nasty lesbian'.

Ask.FM is a question and answer site where users can post questions, anonymously, on other users accounts. There are numerous reported cases of online bullying where users post

streams of offensive comments, including homophobic questions.

GAY CHATROOMS AND DATING SITES

One in ten gay young people aged under 18 and one in three (33 per cent) 18 and 19-year-olds use dating websites for gay adults to meet other gay people and learn about gay life.

The School Report, 2012

Gay dating sites and chatrooms can be highly sexualised environments where adults are looking to meet for sex or to engage in sexually explicit conversations. This can quickly lead to young people being pressurised into sexting or sexual activity.

I had an iPod touch so I downloaded a few gay chat line apps on it and I started talking to guys on there and, for about four weeks, guys were just like helping me out and making sure I was okay. But then one guy was like 'have you ever had sex with a guy before?' and I said 'no' and he was like 'do you want to try?'. So I started meeting up with guys and I liked it so I started doing it more often and I set up more profiles.

Barnardo's, Running from hate to what you think is love, 2013

Because most gay young people don't learn anything about sexual orientation at school, a sexual conversation on a dating site could end up being their first insight into gay people and relationships. This sends a negative message about same-sex relationships and perpetuates a wider stereotype that they are all about sex.

Anyone who has spent time on Grindr or Gaydar will know that it is common to receive sexually aggressive messages accompanied by photographs of the sender in provocative poses, often naked.

Comment piece, *PinkNews*, February 2013

Mobile devices make it difficult for schools and parents to know what young people are doing online. Meanwhile, the explosion of social media apps has created a situation where it is easy for people to meet – sometimes explicitly for sex. Although this poses a risk for all young people, gay young people can be tempted to use apps to meet other gay people. Forgetting to log out of sites or apps and leaving location settings switched on also puts young people's safety at risk.

Snapshot is a popular app that allows users to send each other images that disappear after short periods of time, from 1 to 10 seconds. This can make young people think it's safe to send texts or images they wouldn't want others to see. However images can still be saved permanently by screenshot or by taking a photo on another device. Bullies can also use the app to send nasty messages safe in the knowledge that the evidence will disappear.

Tinder is an iPhone app for over 18s that matches people up by location. Users sign up through their **Facebook** accounts, allowing others to view information including their first name, photos, interests and age. They then decide whether they want to connect.

Grindr is a gay dating app for over 18s and matches users up by location. Although designed for dating, the app also attracts gay men looking to meet other people for casual sex. Many under-age gay young people sign up with fake details, sometimes leading to inappropriate conversations, unsafe sex and exploitative relationships.

There is a 14 year old lad who has managed to download Grindr (a 'social media' app – let's be more honest – it's an app for men who have sex with men to meet and hook up for sex). Well this 14 year old has been nipping out of his bedroom window, sideling over to the local park at midnight and made himself available to all and sundry after agreeing to meet them on Grindr. Clearly he has put himself at a huge risk of HIV and all the other STIs and of course statutory rape.

MSM (Men who have sex with men) Communities worker (South East)

What you need to know

PARENTS AND TEACHERS

- There are a range of different ways that young people engage with others online. Being aware of the most common ones will make it easier for you to take action if young people are at risk.
- The increasing prevalence of smartphones means it's now easier than ever for young people to access the internet without parental or teacher supervision.
- Parental internet controls on smartphones can be used to filter inappropriate sites and apps, but this doesn't account for every site or for access through public wifi.

YOUNG PEOPLE

- You probably use lots of different sites – make sure you have control over your accounts and don't share personal information with friends.
- As a general rule, only post comments and photos online that you'd be happy for your parents to see. Remember the internet's a public space.
- Dating apps and websites might seem an appealing way to meet other gay people but they aren't appropriate for young people under 18 and can put you at real risk.

<4>

IN SCHOOL GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

This chapter looks at

- School policy and filters
- Reporting and recording
- Staff training

Schools across Britain are already doing fantastic work to ensure young people know how to stay safe online. Schools need to make sure that all pupils, including lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils, are getting the guidance they need to stay safe.

SCHOOL POLICY

Creating clear policies and procedures on internet use in school is the first step towards keeping pupils safe when they go online. E-safety and internet acceptable use policies let all members of the school community know how to use the internet responsibly and what actions to take if something goes wrong.

Schools find that acceptable use policies are most effective when they include the following:

- Unacceptable online behaviours and respecting others
- Blocking communications from unknown or unwanted sources
- Accessing and downloading inappropriate or illegal content
- Privacy settings, security and passwords
- Reporting

Anti-bullying, e-safety and acceptable use policies should state explicitly that homophobic bullying, including cyberbullying, is unacceptable. Good policies make it clear that the same sanctions apply to homophobic language and cyberbullying online as in the classroom.

In practice

Chew Valley School takes a zero tolerance approach to homophobic language and bullying which is reflected in their anti-bullying and internet use policies. All members of the school community know about the policies and that homophobic abuse online will be dealt with in the same way as in the classroom.

Displaying acceptable use policies throughout the school and, most importantly, in classrooms with computers reminds pupils what's expected of them. Good schools ask pupils to sign an acceptable use agreement at the beginning of each term or year.

FILTERS

It's important that filters don't prevent gay pupils from accessing age-appropriate information and support online. Reviewing what type of content is blocked by the school's filtering systems is the first step. This includes checking there isn't a blanket ban on all sites containing words that relate to sexual orientation.

Check blocked categories don't include all sites on gay issues. 'Keyword list' or 'search-term' filtering systems should be reviewed to ensure they don't contain words like gay, lesbian, bisexual and sexual orientation.

In practice

Herts for Learning Ltd provides teaching, learning, leadership and business support to schools and education settings. Herts advised schools that websites containing terms such as homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, sexuality and sexual orientation should not be filtered out. At the same time Herts makes sure schools protect pupils from inappropriate content, by filtering out unsuitable sites. This includes sites containing offensive versions, colloquialisms and contractions of words relating to sexual orientation.

Appropriate sites should be unblocked by a staff member or reported to the relevant internet service provider or local authority. Good schools assign a member of staff, such as an E-Safety Coordinator or IT Manager, to do this, supported by senior leadership and other staff to determine appropriate content.

In practice

At Platanos College the E-Safety Coordinator meets regularly with the Headteacher and governors to review filtering processes. This process is clearly laid out in the school's e-safety policy.

Encouraging teachers and pupils to report blocked sites can help with the monitoring process. Providing anonymous ways to do this, e.g. putting reporting boxes in IT classrooms, will help gay students feel confident to report websites on gay issues.

'User-level' or age related filtering systems mean that schools can tailor the type of content different year groups are allowed

to access. This allows older gay pupils the opportunity to access information on sexual health, for example, that they may not feel comfortable accessing, or is blocked, at home or elsewhere.

REPORTING

Implementing clear and simple reporting mechanisms means that staff, parents and pupils will feel confident to report worrying or dangerous situations such as cyberbullying, sexting or inappropriate content.

In practice

At Chew Valley School a member of staff experienced homophobic abuse on Facebook from some pupils. They screenshot the abusive comments and brought the evidence straight into school. The pupils involved were immediately spoken to and their parents were informed. The issue was resolved very quickly and hasn't happened since.

Reporting to a teacher or parent can be difficult for gay students, particularly if they're not already out. Providing anonymous ways to report such as a 'reporting box' in a corridor is a simple way to get around this. However, the best schools use online reporting mechanisms, text message or email systems staffed by teachers or trained mentors. Online systems provide an immediate way to report from home and at any time.

In practice

Ofsted's guidance on good e-safety emphasises the importance of 'robust and integrated reporting routines'. This includes school-based online reporting processes, such as SHARP (Student Help Advice Reporting Page System), which allow pupils to report issues to staff without having to talk face to face. The SHARP site also contains information and guidance on problems affecting young people, including bullying and hate crime.

Gay young people may find it easier to talk to a youth worker or charity at first. Schools should emphasise that the most important thing is to tell an adult they trust. If a young person is

a victim of sexual exploitation or thinks an adult is trying to engage them in sexual activity, the police need to know about it. Show pupils how they can make an online report to the **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**. CEOP has a 'report abuse button' that can be loaded onto school computers. Most social networking sites have inbuilt reporting mechanisms.

Reassure pupils that sexual orientation has nothing to do with how they'll be treated if they report and remind them that they can talk, in confidence, to experienced counsellors at **ChildLine**.

RECORDING

Recording online incidents allows schools to identify problem areas and make sure issues are dealt with effectively and consistently. For instance, if rates of homophobic cyberbullying are high, schools can target this with an all-school email or assembly.

Anonymous pupil surveys are a good way to work out whether there are problem areas the schools needs to address. Use the following types of questions:

- *Have you ever experienced homophobic bullying online?*
- *Did you report the bullying? How?*
- *Have you ever used homophobic language online?*
- *Are you aware of other pupils using homophobic language online?*
- *Have you ever been stopped from accessing information or educational sites on a school computer? Which sites?*
- *What sites do you regularly use at home? Do you know how to report problems on every site you use?*


Surveys can be adapted for different year groups to include age-appropriate issues. For example, older pupils could be asked about sexting. Including a free-text box gives pupils the chance to raise issues that haven't been addressed.

In practice

Platanos College conducted e-safety surveys across individual year groups to gauge pupils' understanding of different issues and where the college needed to target support.



Reporting to a teacher or parent can be difficult for gay students, particularly if they're not already out.



Stonewall's Train the Trainer seminars give school staff the tools and skills they need to tackle homophobia, support gay young people and include gay issues across the curriculum.

They're also a great opportunity to share best practice and learn how other schools are doing this work. The seminars help participants develop an individual action plan for their school and give their school membership of the School Champions programme. To find out more, visit www.stonewall.org.uk/teachertraining

STAFF TRAINING

Many teachers lack the confidence to talk about gay issues in e-safety lessons or other areas of the curriculum. Providing training will make staff feel more confident supporting gay young people at school. Training should cover the school's own e-safety, behaviour and safeguarding policies, outlining how to respond when internet safety issues arise, but should also include advice on the challenges different pupil groups might face.

In practice

Herts for Learning Ltd ensures that training on both e-safety and sex and relationships education in secondary schools always includes information on the particular vulnerability of LGBT young people. In particular staff discuss why gay young people are much more likely to use online sites to seek friendships and relationships and the risks involved.

In practice

Brighton and Hove City Council's sex and relationships education resource reminds teaching staff to include case studies that are relevant to lesbian, gay and bisexual young people and includes ready-made examples.

Staff won't necessarily be able to answer every question a young person has on gay issues. However all staff should have access to relevant information and be able to signpost to organisations and resources that can help.

What you need to know

- Making e-safety inclusive of all young people doesn't have to be hard as long as you get a few basics right. An e-safety policy which explicitly talks about homophobic cyberbullying is a good start.
- Make sure your filters don't prevent gay pupils from accessing age-appropriate information and support online.
- Make it easy for young people to report online issues. Recording online incidents allows you to identify problem areas.
- Support staff to talk confidently about all areas of e-safety, including the issues that affect gay young people.

We need more information. These kids need to be able to contact support services outside of school as school is only a small part of their daily lives. Morgan, teacher, secondary school (South East), *The Teachers' Report*

Training should remind staff that the most important thing is to reassure the young person who has confided in them. It's important staff know that if a young person says they are gay or is talking to other young people online, this doesn't constitute a safeguarding risk. However pupils should be aware that staff have a responsibility to keep them safe and that might mean involving someone else if they are in an unsafe situation e.g. they are talking to an adult online. If a gay pupil does make a disclosure staff should follow safeguarding procedures, but also ask whether their parents know they are gay and support them appropriately.

For more information on how to support a young person coming out, see Stonewall's guide *Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people*.



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IN SCHOOL MAKING E-SAFETY RELEVANT FOR EVERYONE

This chapter looks at

- What to cover in e-safety lessons
- Making sure PSHE and SRE is relevant to everyone
- Engaging parents

School policies alone won't equip young people to make safe choices when they go online. A comprehensive e-safety curriculum is the best way to communicate internet safety messages to pupils. Lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils need to know about basic internet safety in the same way as all young people, but it's important that the information and advice given in e-safety lessons is relevant to and explicit about the issues gay young people face.

WHAT TO SHARE

All young people need to know how to post safely and responsibly. This means never posting personal information or details, including passwords, home or email addresses, phone numbers or the school that they go to online.

In practice

The Blue Coat School in Oldham has developed an e-safety programme which encourages pupils to think carefully every time they post comments or send texts, emails and images. Young people learn about different scenarios that can follow sending an inappropriate text or image. Pupils are then given this easy, memorable advice, 'Think b4 u press send'. Students were also asked to come up with a golden rule 'Don't send anything you would feel uncomfortable putting up on the whiteboard in your classroom for all to see.' which was promoted across school.

Giving pupils a quick checklist can also help prevent unsuitable posts. Get pupils to ask themselves *Would I say this in person? Do I know who can see this information? What could someone do with this information? Could what I post be hurtful to anyone?*

E-safety lessons should remind pupils about their online reputation or 'digital footprint' and that if they post something personal it can be very difficult to take back.

In practice

Childnet International, the leading child internet safety charity, has created an Online Reputation checklist. This encourages young people to make sure their digital footprint is positive rather than negative. The resource directs young people to check their privacy settings, think before they post, delete unused accounts and search themselves online to see what comes up.

In practice

The Castle School reminds pupils that future employers might look them up online using the following example: After being offered a job by internet company Cisco, one Twitterer posted the following teaser on Twitter: 'Cisco just offered me a job! Now I have to choose between a fatty paycheck and a daily commute to a job where I will hate the work.' Cisco saw the Tweet and promptly replied 'Who is the hiring manager? I'm sure they would love to know you will hate the work. We here at Cisco are versed in the web.'



Pupils should learn about the consequences of sending a sexual image, from losing control of photos on social networking sites to bullying, blackmail and exploitation.

Sexing is most effectively tackled as a specific issue. Pupils should learn about the consequences of sending a sexual image, from losing control of photos on social networking sites to bullying, blackmail and exploitation. Remind pupils that whatever they do on webcam or through video chat can be recorded and saved as well. Real-life examples usually drive the message home.

In practice

The South West Grid for Learning's resource *So you got naked online...* is a guide for young people on what sexting is, what can happen to an image and how to go about reporting the problem.

Equipping pupils to deal with pressure and providing tools to respond to requests for sexual images will prevent sexting happening in the first place. Equally, pupils should learn why they shouldn't pressure others to sext.

In practice

ChildLine's Zipit app provides young people with practical tools to respond to sexting requests, including ready-made images and messages. The app also gives advice on dealing with a 'sexting crisis' and on where to get help.

Pupils need to know how to report that they've sent or received an inappropriate image and that the sooner they report, the less chance an image will be shared widely. If it's been sent to a friend, they may be able to just ask them to delete it or ask the school to help. However, if the image has been posted online or sent to a stranger, they'll need to tell an adult. Pupils should be made aware that sexual images of young people under 18 are illegal. However, it's important to emphasise that the law is there to protect them so they won't get into trouble when they report. If the images are online, or the incident involves blackmail or exploitation, the police or CEOP need to know.

HOW TO SEARCH

Young people need to know the information they find online can be unreliable. The best schools recognise that young people need to develop the skills to make their own decisions about what's reliable.

Helpful tips for students:

- Check information against more than one source
- Ask yourself who the author is and where the information came from
- Use websites you know and trust
- If in doubt, check with an adult

WHO TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH

Young people need the tools to make safe friendships online. Using case studies and examples about same-sex relationships in e-safety lessons helps gay young people know that this guidance applies to them as well.

It would be good if they made sure that they use gender neutral terms in internet safety lessons, just because otherwise it excludes people. Stonewall Youth Volunteer

The safest approach is for young people only to request or accept friendships from people they know in real life and avoid responding to messages from strangers. Lessons should challenge the idea that you can really know someone you've only met online and show pupils how easy it is to fake an online identity. Remind pupils that lying about their own age not only puts them at risk but could get the adult they are talking to into trouble.

Role plays and case study scenarios allow pupils to explore how to stay safe. Even young people who know the dangers of meeting up with strangers from the internet on their own may still decide to do so, particularly if they are gay and haven't yet come out to anyone. Be clear with pupils that it's never safe to meet strangers alone, but include other ways to stay safe and what to do if things go wrong.

In practice

The Castle School includes the following advice for Year 12 students:

If you DO meet up with someone...

- Never meet people alone that you have only met online.
- Always meet, and stay, in a busy public place. Don't accept a lift from your date.
- Tell someone else *who* you are meeting, *where* you are going and *when* you will be back, and stay in touch.
- Stay sober and take your mobile phone.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING

Good e-safety lessons encourage young people to be respectful when they post. Young people sometimes makes offensive comments online without meaning to be hurtful. E-safety lessons can show pupils how online 'banter', including homophobic language, can be hurtful, misinterpreted or easily turn into something more serious.

In practice

Brighton and Hove City Council has developed an education resource that includes a section on 'The Law, Sex and The Internet'. A quiz activity for Key Stage 3 pupils focuses on different types of cyberbullying and which behaviours are illegal. One of the examples given is a 14 year old boy writing offensive homophobic comments on a 13 year old boy's Bebo profile. By the end of the session, pupils understand that all different types of cyberbullying are hurtful and have the potential to be illegal.

The best lessons get pupils to consider different types of cyberbullying and the role of 'bystanders' who see online bullying happening but don't do anything about it.



Don't respond or retaliate as this can make the situation worse.

Block the bully using site settings.

Save the evidence by taking a screenshot.

Tell someone you trust as soon as possible.

In practice

King James Academy in Bishop Auckland uses a quiz to make pupils think about whether they've ever been involved in bullying behaviour online. The quiz asks general questions such as whether pupils have ever sent a nasty or threatening message, pretended to be someone else, circulated content without permission or created a nasty blog or webpage about someone. The quiz also asks about specific types of online bullying, including whether pupils have ever used homophobic language or joined in with homophobic discussions online. By the end of the quiz, pupils are aware of most of the different types of behaviour that could amount to cyberbullying.

When it comes to dealing with cyberbullying, most schools use this simple guidance:

- **Don't respond or retaliate as this can make the situation worse.**
- **Block the bully using site settings.**
- **Save the evidence by taking a screenshot.**
- **Tell someone you trust as soon as possible.**

Saving the evidence can help stop or catch the perpetrator. Good schools show students how to save conversations, take screenshots of messages and report problems to site providers.

How to take a screenshot

On a **pc**, press **PrtScr** in the top right corner of the keyboard.

On a **Mac**, press **shift and cmd** and **3**.

On **iPhones** and **iPads**, press **Home** and **Sleep/Wake** at the same time.

On **android** phones, press **Volume Down** and **Power** for 2 seconds.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION (PSHE) AND SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION (SRE)

When gay issues are included across the curriculum, lesbian, gay and bisexual young people don't need to go online to find this information. PSHE also provides opportunities to reinforce online safety messages around relationships, bullying, peer pressure and exploitation.

The best schools embed this e-safety work across the curriculum. Lessons about families and relationships should make clear that all healthy relationships, including same-sex relationships, are based on mutual trust and respect. This equips gay young people with healthy expectations and makes them less likely to feel pressured into unsafe relationships online.

In practice

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has developed a film 'Exploited' that helps young people identify features of an exploitative relationship compared with the development of a healthy relationship.

Safety on popular sites

All pupils should familiarise themselves with safety, privacy and reporting settings before they begin using any site.
Most popular sites have information sections on staying safe.



Facebook

- < Block or report a person or inappropriate post by going to the top of their timeline or post and clicking on the *Block/Report* button. Alternatively click *Privacy Settings* at the top of your account click on the *Block/Report* button and enter their name. You can then choose whether to report, block or unfriend them. >
- < Control who sees what on your Facebook profile, by going to *Account* at the top of the page. Click on *Privacy Settings* and change them so that only '*friends*' can see posts or contact you. >



YouTube

- < Click '*remove*' next to any comment to delete it from YouTube. Any replies to the comment will also be removed. >
- < Create a list of approved and banned users by adding and removing users in the comments settings. >
- < Use '*safety mode*' to filter out offensive material by scrolling to the bottom of any YouTube page. Click the drop-down menu in the *Safety* section and click *safety mode*. >



Instagram

- < To make sure only approved followers can see your photos and videos click '*Edit Your Profile*' next to your profile picture. >
- < On iPhone/iPad scroll to *Posts Are Private* and click *On*. On Android, tick the box next to '*Posts are private*'. >
- < When you add an image to *Photo Map*, anyone can see where it was taken. Remove location information from a photo, by tapping the *edit* button in the upper right hand corner of your Photo Map. From there, *deselect* images to permanently remove their location. >

Ask.FM

- < Stop people posting anonymous questions by going to *privacy settings* and clicking '*Do not allow anonymous questions*'. >
- < Move your mouse over any post and a flag will appear allowing you to report it for spam or scam, hate speech, violence or pornographic content. >
- < Delete a question by clicking the *small cross* in the corner above it. >
- < Block other users from contacting you by hovering over their profile and clicking the *block* icon. >



Snapchat

- < Make sure only people you've accepted as *Friends* can send by clicking *Menu* in the bottom right hand corner. Next to *Send me snaps*, click '*My friends*' not '*Everyone*'. >
- < To block someone click *Menu* then *My Friends*. Swipe or click and hold on their name, click *Edit* and then click *Block* or *Delete*. >
- < Report a person or abusive message by going to *Snapchat.com* and clicking *Support*. >



Twitter

- < To block someone from seeing your account, go to their profile page and click the *person* icon. Select '*block*' from the options listed. >
- < Unfollow someone by hovering over the blue *Following* button on their profile page until it changes to a red '*unfollow*' then click on it. >
- < Disable location settings on mobiles by going to settings, then:
 - Twitter for iOS click '*location*', then click '*off*'.
 - Twitter for Android untick '*location*'
 - Twitter mobile.twitter.com, click *edit* next to '*account*' and '*privacy*' and untick '*Add location information to my tweets*'. >
- < Report tweets by tapping the *•••* icon. Select '*report tweet*' and then one of the listed reasons. >

In practice

Brighton and Hove City Council's sex and education resource includes an activity on what is ok in a teenage relationship, and covers rights and responsibilities, domestic violence and consent. Students are given a set of cards showing different situations and work in groups to put them in a line from 'OK' to 'not OK'. One of the related activities is to explore whether any of their responses would be different for same-sex relationships.

Sex and relationships lessons should include advice on safe sex and sexual health in gay relationships and provide a list of websites containing reliable information for gay young people. PSHE can also be used to discuss the importance of respecting difference and the impact of homophobic bullying.



Stonewall's feature film for secondary school students, FIT, has specific chapters that look at the impact of homophobic bullying and language. These 15 minute chapters can be followed by classroom discussions.

We spoke about how homophobia was the same as racial abuse and is prejudice.

Sam, teacher, secondary school (London)

Including gay issues in the curriculum in a positive way doesn't just help gay young people make safe decisions and feel included. It also means that other young people in school are less likely to develop homophobic attitudes or engage in homophobic bullying.

I think schools should teach or discuss gay issues as it might increase knowledge and decrease the level of bullying in schools.

Ali, 14, secondary school (Scotland)

SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

Providing information and advice 'offline' is just as important as ensuring gay pupils know how to stay safe when they go online. School noticeboards, resource areas and libraries are good places to put leaflets, information and resources on gay issues so that they can be accessed easily and anonymously. Stocking school libraries with age-appropriate films, books and magazines allows gay young people to find out about being gay without having to search online.

Some schools have lists of useful organisations and age-appropriate websites to help gay pupils access reliable online information. The **YoungStonewall** website is a good place to start. www.youngstonewall.org.uk

Stonewall's Info Service provides information on a range of issues affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people including health, housing, bullying and hate crime. The service is accessible Monday to Friday from 9.30-17.30 on **08000 50 20 20** or info@stonewall.org.uk

In practice

At Brookfield Community School information leaflets, posters, postcards and business cards are available around school, in the library and at reception. These include information from Stonewall, Derbyshire Friend & Open Out LGBT support. The school personal advisor also has details of support networks.

In practice

The Young Pride in Herts website provides information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people aged 13-25 in Hertfordshire. The site directs gay young people to local services and provides information and advice on issues ranging from sexual and mental health to coming out and gay role models. There is also a confidential point of contact for young people who need support.

Finding out where the local gay youth group is and publicising this in school will help lesbian, gay and bisexual students make safe friendships. Some schools have invited their local gay youth group in to tell pupils about their experiences, who they are and how to join.

If teachers knew about local lesbian, gay and bisexual youth groups, that would help. Most of the time, they don't know anything so people have to look it up themselves. If teachers knew about a group and someone comes out to them, they could just say, 'oh, you know there's that youth group in your area'.

Stonewall Youth Volunteer

In practice

Allsorts Youth Project provides a range of services for LGBT young people in Brighton & Hove. The group has developed a **Youth Peer Education Project** where trained youth peer educators go into local secondary schools, colleges and youth projects to run workshops on the issues facing LGBT young people.



Lessons about families and relationships should make clear that all healthy relationships, including gay relationships, based on mutual trust and respect. This equips gay young people with healthy expectations and makes them less likely to feel pressured into unsafe or exploitative relationships online.

ENGAGING PARENTS

Most of the time that young people spend on the internet is outside of school. Engaging parents ensures that pupils get a consistent message around e-safety. All parents want to know that their child will be protected by the school if they experience homophobic bullying online.

The school's e-safety messages can be communicated through letters and newsletters and information on the school website and prospectus. Good schools go further and ask parents to sign e-safety agreements which commit them to challenging and reporting homophobia online.

Often parents aren't familiar with the sites young people use. Set up parent workshops to share information on how popular sites work, risks and ways to stay safe. The best schools organise student-led workshops, where pupils feed back to parents what they have learnt about staying safe online.

In practice

Brookfield Community School holds 'settling in' evenings for Year 7 parents where cybersafety is one of the topics covered. Brookfield also puts up a display on how to stay safe online at every event parents are invited to, from parents' evenings to school performances. This makes sure that the vast majority of parents see the information at some point and that it can be continually updated with current issues and information.

What you need to know

- E-safety lessons should cover what information to share online, what websites to trust and how to make safe friendships online. Remember to include examples and case studies that are relevant to gay young people.
- Explicitly including gay issues in PSHE and SRE makes it less likely gay young people will look online for advice.
- Engaging parents in e-safety work will ensure that the same rules apply at school and at home.

<6> IN SCHOOL INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

This chapter looks at

- Putting young people at the centre of e-safety work
- Peer mentoring schemes
- Using the internet in a positive way

Schools find that messages around e-safety are most effective when young people are engaged in this work. Although there are risks to navigate, using the internet shouldn't be discouraged – young people certainly won't respond to being told they can't, or shouldn't, go online. One of the best ways to keep young people safe is to support and encourage positive ways to use the internet.

Stonewall's 'Gay. Let's Get Over It!' resources give pupils some easy ways to tackle homophobia online. Young people can respond to homophobic language online by posting #GetOverIt or 'Let's be honest, it's probably not!' whenever someone says 'that's so gay' online. Stonewall's posters are also available as Facebook banners.

RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT

Good schools get young people to think beyond their own behaviour and give pupils the tools to be proactive if they witness homophobic cyberbullying.

In practice

At Brookfield Community School a student led Anti-Bullying Ambassador Group report any instances of cyberbullying that they become aware of. The anti-bullying ambassadors are also leading a zero tolerance project to homophobic language in school, based on Wiltshire Council's successful ZeeTee (zero tolerance to homophobic language) campaign. Together, this work has resulted in students being sanctioned for making homophobic comments online.

PEER MENTORING

Peer mentoring gives gay young people an opportunity to talk about sexual orientation with people their own age. Talking to a peer can be much less daunting than approaching a teacher or parent about an issue like coming out or homophobic bullying. Some schools train student groups, such as anti-bullying ambassadors, to become mentors. Even if it isn't possible to set up peer mentoring in school, there may be a scheme run by a local youth group or university.

In practice

Bath and North East Somerset County Council support an e-mentoring system run by students at the University of Bath. Student mentors are trained to support and signpost gay young people via email. The scheme allows young people aged 14-25 to talk confidentially with another young person about sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual health





The best schools give pupils the tools to be proactive if they witness homophobic cyberbullying or language online.

Before using an e-mentoring service, check that the mentors are professionally trained, that emails and conversations are moderated and reporting mechanisms are in place.

In practice

ChildLine has online message boards where under-18s can share experiences and get support from other young people. Young people are given a 'locker' and asked to create a nickname to use online. All messages posted on the board are moderated within 24 hours and young people are given tips on staying safe, respectful posting and who to report anything worrying to before they start.

MAKING IT POSITIVE

There are lots of ways to empower gay young people to use the internet in a positive way, whether to find out about gay role models, create a blog or support other gay young people. In many schools young people, both gay and straight, are using the internet to run online campaigns tackling homophobia and celebrating diversity.

In practice

In *Wiltshire Council*, young people created a YouTube video called *#breakthecycle*. The video depicts what cyberbullying is and encourages all young people to take action if they see it happening. The film was developed by the Young Commissioners Group in response to Wiltshire's Anti-bullying Strategy.

Specific dates like **Anti-bullying week** and **International Day Against Homophobia** are ideal opportunities to focus on tackling homophobia online through assemblies, events and lessons. **Safer Internet Day**, which takes place in February,

focuses on promoting safe and responsible internet use and coincides with **LGBT History Month**.

In practice

During Anti-bullying week *The Blue Coat School* in Oldham decided to run an awareness campaign to tackle homophobic language. Each day of the week a different statement from Stonewall's *School Report* was uploaded onto the homepage of every school computer. The statements related to the negative impact of homophobic language e.g. '84% of gay young people feel distressed when they hear 'gay' used in a negative way.' At the bottom of the homepage, pupils could click on a link to other sites with more information on the impact of homophobic language, including YouTube videos.

In practice

Leicestershire County Council supports a website aimed at and run by young people. *The Jitty* gives young people an opportunity to write and post articles about different issues and experiences. (Under-16s must have parental permission.) Some gay young people have contributed articles on coming out and getting support.

Help older pupils find positive role models online by signposting to age-appropriate sites. The **RUComingOut** website profiles 'coming out' stories from people of all ages and backgrounds. The **It Gets Better** project hosts more than 50,000 online videos in support of gay young people, created by gay and straight people. Role models have a hugely positive impact on all young people.

Jessie J is a huge inspiration to me. When people say stuff to me, I think of her and tell myself that she got through it, and so can I.

Laura, 15, faith secondary school (South East)

What you need to know

- Involving young people is a great way to get them to take ownership of e-safety initiatives. This can include peer mentoring and youth-led workshops.
- Be positive about the opportunities the internet has to offer to young people and empower them to use it responsibly.



AT HOME CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

This chapter looks at

- Steps that parents can take to help young people stay safe online
- Using internet controls in the home
- How to deal with bullying
- How to report inappropriate behaviour

Gay young people are much less likely to use unsafe sites online if they know there's someone to talk to at home. Be clear with your son or daughter that they can talk to you about anything and talk positively about gay issues at home.

If your child is gay, have a conversation about whether anyone else is openly gay at school and ask if they'd like to meet other gay people. **Stonewall's** *What's in my area?* database lists gay youth, social and support groups. Ask them if they've made, or tried to make, gay friends online and which sites they used. If they have, try to be supportive even if you feel shocked or upset.



Stonewall's guide *So you think your child is gay?* answers some of the common questions and concerns you might have if your child comes out.

Although parents often have suspicions, there's no way to tell whether a young person is gay or not and any young person can experience problems online, so it's important every parent creates a supportive home environment.

PARENTAL INTERNET CONTROLS

Parents can also protect children from inappropriate content by using security settings and parental internet filters. Gay young people will often search for information about gay issues online, but these are sometimes blocked by filters. By doing some quick online searches yourself, you can check that there's still access to sites that will help your child stay safe and find information. Check sites like **Stonewall** and **ChildLine** aren't blocked. Report blocked sites to your internet service provider.

Your child probably uses a smartphone or tablet such as an iPhone or iPad. Most schools advise young people on using smart devices safely but parents can take some extra steps. Registering a phone for a child user means that access to adult sites, apps and chatrooms is restricted. If your family has shared access to an App account, remember to delete credit card details and log out of app stores so that your child can't download adult apps. Remember that public wifi won't necessarily have the same security settings as your own mobile network or home internet provider.



Serious threats or harassment
should be reported to the police
or Child Exploitation and Online
Protection Centre (CEOP).



Young people are often reluctant to talk about sensitive issues like sexting or exploitation. This can be even more difficult for gay young people who are uncertain of, or are just coming to terms with, their sexual orientation.

BACKING UP SCHOOL WORK

Ask your child whether they know where to access information about safety, reporting and privacy on the sites they're using or whether they can show you what they've learnt at school about staying safe.

E-safety is continually changing and you're not going to become an instant expert on everything. Don't forget that most schools provide parents with information or workshops on internet safety. There are also lots of resources available to help.

See *Resources and further information* pages 26-7.

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

Remember that not every child who experiences homophobia online is gay so avoid jumping to this conclusion if it happens. Even if your child is gay they may not be sure or ready to talk about it. The important thing is to be supportive, let them know it isn't their fault and help them to report the bullying.

If the bully is another pupil, help your child approach a teacher and if possible, save and print out evidence of the bullying to take with you. If the bully is a stranger, help your child block the person, close down their account if necessary and report the issue to the site provider.

Serious threats or harassment should be reported to the police or **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**.

You can also play a role in challenging your child, or their peers, if you notice they are using homophobic language online. Have a conversation with them about why homophobic language is hurtful and how they could easily be accused of cyberbullying.

SEXTING, EXPLOITATION AND INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Young people are often reluctant to talk about sensitive issues like sexting or exploitation. This can be even more difficult for gay young people who are uncertain of, or are just coming to terms with, their sexual orientation. Asking whether your child has learnt about these issues at school or using stories from the media can be an easier way to broach the subject.

Report sexting and online abuse to the police or **CEOP**. If your child has come across illegal content, report this to the **Internet Watch Foundation**. You can help your child feel as safe and supported as possible by asking if they need extra support to deal with what has happened. They may want to talk things through with a gay support group or confidential counselling service like **ChildLine**.

What you need to know

- Check out your internet filter settings to make sure they aren't blocking sites like Stonewall and ChildLine. Even if you're not entirely comfortable with your child being gay, it's better that they get the information from a reputable source.
- Know how to respond if your child gets into trouble or experiences bullying. Remember, not every child who faces homophobic bullying is gay.
- Ask your child which internet sites they like to use and check that they've learnt how to use them safely in school.



WHAT THE LAW SAYS

EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on school governing bodies in England and Wales to promote the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in their care. This includes lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. Homophobic language and bullying online have a proven negative impact on the wellbeing of gay young people and as such, schools have a responsibility to tackle it. The Act also gives head teachers the ability to respond to incidents that take place outside school hours, for example, homophobic language and bullying on the internet.

Providing e-safety and sex and relationships education that address the issues facing lesbian, gay and bisexual young people will ensure that the school is promoting the safety and wellbeing of every pupil.

OFSTED

The Ofsted framework now explicitly directs inspectors to look at a school's efforts to tackle both cyberbullying and bullying or prejudicial language based on sexual orientation. Inspectors also look at how the school supports the needs of distinct groups of pupils such as lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils.

Ofsted also looks at how schools protect and educate all staff and pupils in their use of technology over three key areas, content, contact and conduct, including whether appropriate mechanisms are in place to intervene and support any incident. This includes incidents involving homophobia and gay pupils.

Amongst other things inspectors will check whether staff:

- **are aware of policies and what the school's sanctions are**
- **understand what is meant by 'cyber-bullying' and the impact it can have**
- **are aware of the reporting mechanisms used in the school**

Inspectors will also check whether students:

- **know where to go for help**
- **are aware of at least one of the rules for using the internet**
- **know what the risks are of posting inappropriate content on the internet**

Ofsted's 2010 report *The Safe Use of New Technologies* provides more information on good e-safety provision.

Ofsted's 2010 report *Not yet good enough, personal, social, health and economic education in schools* urges schools to cover 'sexuality' issues in sex and relationships education. The report also recommends that schools do more to address the influence of pornography on healthy sexual relationships and practical skills on staying safe and where to get help.

SEXTING

Under the **Protection of Children Act 1978** and the **Criminal Justice Act 1988** if a young person, under the age of 18, creates a sexually explicit image of themselves or someone else under the age of 18, they have created an indecent image of a child. Similarly receiving or sending a sexual image of someone under the age of 18 equates to the possession or distribution of child pornography.

The Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland have made clear that young people involved in sexting for the first time won't face criminal prosecution. However, the situation will be investigated to make sure that the young person isn't at risk.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying isn't a specific offence under UK law. However, serious bullying should be referred to the police. There are some criminal laws that may be applicable to cyberbullying, particularly in relation to harassment and 'threatening and menacing communications'. These include:

- **The Protection from Harassment Act 1997**
- **The Malicious Communications Act 1988**
- **Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003**
- **Public Order Act 1986**
- **The Defamation Acts of 1952 and 1996**

What you need to know

- **Sexting under the age of 18 and harassment online are illegal.**
- **The law actively encourages and in some cases requires**

schools to take a proactive approach to e-safety which is relevant to all young people.

<9> TOP TIPS

<For parents and carers>

BE SUPPORTIVE

Make sure your child knows you'd be on their side if they found themselves in trouble online, however bad they think it is. Let them know their sexuality doesn't matter to you, but making sure they're safe and happy does.

BACK UP SCHOOL WORK

Remind your child that making any kind of personal information public online, including being gay, can attract the wrong attention. Help them find reliable sites to learn about gay issues and safe ways to meet other gay people.

AGREE THE RULES

Discuss and agree together sites that are okay to use. Aim to agree that sites or apps for gay adults aren't suitable.

ASK QUESTIONS

Ask your child what kind of sites they like to use and whether they can show you how to stay safe and report problems. This gives you a good insight into what they're doing online.

BE ALERT

Look out for unusual behaviour. If your child is avoiding using the internet or phone, or seems preoccupied after going online, they might be experiencing cyberbullying.

<For schools and teachers>

GET THE BASICS RIGHT

Make sure e-safety and behaviour policies clearly state that homophobia online is unacceptable. Create anonymous reporting mechanisms for online incidents and communicate these to pupils, staff and parents.

MAKE E-SAFETY RELEVANT

Talking about gay issues and same-sex relationships in e-safety lessons and PSHE ensures gay young people know to make safe choices online and will feel confident reporting problems.

SET THE GROUND RULES

Make sure pupils know that homophobia online is just as serious as homophobia in the classroom. Establish that adult sites and inappropriate content are banned. Involving pupils in setting the rules will help get them on board.

SUPPORT GAY PUPILS

When support and information on gay issues and youth groups is available in school, gay young people are less likely to look for information or friendships on unsafe, unreliable or adult sites.

MAKE IT POSITIVE

Help gay pupils find positive ways to use the internet and find gay role models online. Lots of young people are already running successful online campaigns to tackle homophobia.

<For lesbian, gay and bisexual young people>

KEEP IT PRIVATE

Never share personal details like your phone number, address or school with someone online, even if you think you know them well. Before using any site, check out how to keep your stuff private, block people and report anything worrying.

THINK TWICE

Don't post comments or photos online that you wouldn't want the whole world to see and remember, not everything you read online is true, including when it comes to information on being gay.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

There are lots of safe ways to meet other gay young people once you look into it. Use **Stonewall's Info Service** to find a gay youth group or ask an adult for help if you need it. Remember using adult sites could get you or someone else into trouble.

TELL SOMEONE

If something does go wrong or is worrying you, it's never too late to tell someone. Whether it's a teacher, parent or an organisation like **Stonewall** or **ChildLine**, we're all here to help – being gay won't make any difference at all.

KEEP IT POSITIVE

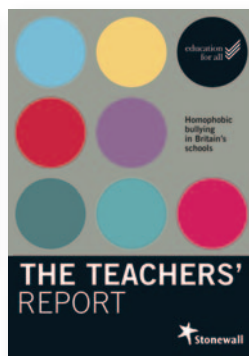
Use the internet to find out more about the things that matter to you, whether that's tackling homophobia or something completely different. Be creative too – why not make a video, blog or even start an online campaign?



RESOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION



Left & above:
Gay. Get Over It! posters and guide for pupils on tackling homophobic language



The Teachers' Report (2009): YouGov polling of over 2,000 primary and secondary school staff about homophobic bullying



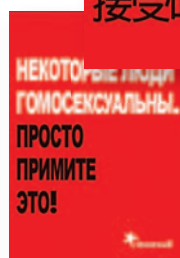
The School Report: The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools in 2012



Role Models A range of interviews which will help inspire gay students not to curb their ambitions because of their sexual orientation



Some People Are Gay. Get Over It! posters, postcards and stickers. Posters are also available in a range of different languages.



Education for All Campaign guide – A guide for young people wanting to start their own campaign in their school or college



So...you think your child is gay? Answers to some of the common questions parents and carers might have when they think their child is gay, or has just come out



Education Guides – including *Working with faith communities*; *Including different families*; *Effective school leadership*; *Primary best practice guide*; *Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people* and *Tackling homophobic language*



Spell It Out: Tackling homophobia in our schools Stonewall's secondary teacher training DVD



FIT DVD A film for secondary school students that tackles the issue of homophobic bullying

OTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

ChildLine is a private and confidential counselling service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen.

www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111

Childnet International works in partnership with others around the world to help make the internet a safe place for children. The Childnet website hosts a range of information and resources for young people, parents, carers and teachers on e-safety. www.childnet.com

Digizen provides resources and information on responsible digital citizenship including guidance on cyberbullying and social networking. www.digizen.org

Kidsmart hosts fun games and activities for children as well as internet safety advice for teachers and parents and carers. www.kidsmart.org.uk

Thinkuknow provides information and advice for children, parents, teachers and other education professionals.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Reporting centres

Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) tackles child abuse on the internet. This website allows parents and young people to make reports of abuse online. www.ceop.police.uk

The Internet Watch Foundation is a reporting centre for illegal content found on the internet. IWF deals specifically with child abuse and criminally obscene images, in the UK and internationally. www.iwf.org.uk

Most social networking sites have their own safety and reporting centres.

<GET IN TOUCH WITH STONEWALL>

Everything we do is based on meeting the needs of schools, teachers and young people. Please do get in touch with us to share your experiences and tell us what you think about our materials.

Stonewall

education@stonewall.org.uk

08000 50 20 20

www.stonewall.org.uk/atschool

www.facebook.com/stonewalluk

Twitter: [@stonewalluk](https://twitter.com/stonewalluk)

www.youtube.com/user/stonewalluk

Stonewall Scotland

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0131 474 8019

www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/atschool

www.facebook.com/stonewallscotland

Twitter: [@stonewallscot](https://twitter.com/stonewallscot)

Stonewall Cymru

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addysg@stonewallcymru.org.uk

02920 237767

www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/atschool

www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/ynyrysgol

www.facebook.com/stonewallcymru

Twitter: [@stonewallcymru](https://twitter.com/stonewallcymru)

www.youtube.com/user/stonewallcymru

<CASE STUDIES>

The best practice case study examples in this guide are taken from schools and local authorities from across the country. Without their contributions and the fantastic work they have been doing, this guide wouldn't be possible.

Platanos College, London Borough of Lambeth

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Herts for Learning Ltd, Hertfordshire County Council's preferred partner for the delivery of school improvement services

Chew Valley School, Bath and North East Somerset

Brookfield Community School, Hampshire

The Blue Coat School, Greater Manchester

Leicestershire County Council

Brighton and Hove City Council

Wiltshire Council

King James Academy, County Durham

The Castle School, Somerset

What's in my area? database for local LGB community and youth groups

www.stonewall.org.uk/whatsinmyarea

< Meeting strangers from the internet is extremely appealing as it doesn't share any of the threats that talking to people in your social circle has. >

Kevin, 17, secondary academy (South West)

< Told you all Tom Daley was a dirty fag! >

Twitter abuse directed at Olympic diver, Tom Daley, who came out in a YouTube video, 2013

< Last summer I was attacked on Facebook through a series of comments and wall posts calling me a 'fag'. >

Harry, 16, single-sex private school (North West)



Stonewall

