The Dilemma   *Should more be done to stop online bullying?*

The story

20. BIG ISSUE *by Ben Pulsford*

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Why do people bully?

LAST week we reported that a new Action For Children poll had found that one in seven children has bullied someone online. But no-one wakes up one day and decides that they're going to upset someone else without cause or reason, so why do some people choose to bully others?

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that takes place online or with phones. It occurs over a smartphone, iPad or computer, via text messages, social media websites, emails etc.

We live in a digital age, with access to the world at our fingertips 24 hours a day. When you think about how easy it is to communicate online, it's no wonder how cyberbullying has spread and grown over the years, particularly among young people.

WHY DO BULLIES BULLY?

The answer is not always as simple as: "Because they're nasty people!"

Bullies bully for a reason. Most of us don't just decide one day that we're going to do something to make someone's life miserable. Everything happens for a reason. Here are some of the common reasons bullies bully:

● **Upbringing** – you may have heard the phrase 'monkey see, monkey do'. This means that if someone sees something enough, they'll learn how to do it themselves. All behaviour is learned from somewhere – even bad behaviour. If someone grew up with a parent or an elder sibling who bullied them, they may think the behaviour is acceptable because it's what they've seen and learned growing up.

● **Environment** – lots of things go on behind closed doors. Think of someone you know who is mean to someone else. Think of their family and their home; anything could be going on at home that is making them bully. Lots

of things can create difficult living environments for young people, such as a divorce or death in the family. A lot of the time, events like this can result in strong emotions, leading to a person bullying someone else.

● **Peer pressure** – sometimes a bully bullies because they feel they need to do so to impress a group of people, or stay part of a group. Some bullies don't want to bully, but they are scared that if they don't, they will be bullied themselves.

● **They are being bullied** – a lot of the time, bullies are bullied themselves. Whether at home, at school or somewhere else, many make people feel victims because they are victimised themselves.

● **It's easy** – this is particularly related to

cyberbullying. If someone feels they can do something without being worried about the consequences, they're likely to continue. This is why cyberbullying spreads – anyone who bullies online is just hiding behind a screen. They don't have to worry about the immediate consequences. This is why reporting bullying is so important – to show the bully that there are consequences for their actions.

● **"It's just banter"** – believe it or not, this one little word causes a lot of problems these days – especially among young people. The word 'banter' is often thrown around to justify making fun of someone. There's a fine line between having a joke with friends and upsetting someone, and often these blurred lines turn people into bullies without them even knowing.

HAVE YOU BULLIED SOMEONE?

These may be causes of bullying, but that doesn't mean bullying is ever acceptable. It isn't. We are responsible for our actions.

Bullying is all about behaviour and it's never too late to change your behaviour. Maybe you've made some bad choices, or maybe it could be that you've read this article and you're starting to question some of your own behaviour.

It can stop right now. If you are making fun of someone, then stop today. All behaviour can be changed, but you have to make the decision. If you have any questions about this article, speak to any adult. Alternatively, if you'd like to speak to someone in private, ChildLine on **0800 11 11** are not allowed to tell anyone what you've talked about, so you don't need to worry about anything.

21. SPECIAL REPORT *by William Twyman*

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The Anti-Bullying Ambassadors meet Nick Gibb MP

AMBASSADORS ANTI-BULLYING

NICK Gibb MP, the schools reform minister, met with Anti-Bullying Ambassadors (ABA) from all over the country to discuss bullying. The young people in attendance have all received, or are working towards, the Diana Award. This is a scheme that celebrates the efforts of young people who are changing the world for the better. As the schools reform minister, it is Mr Gibb's job to improve the way that UK schools operate. Here's what Mr Gibb had to say in response to the ABA questions.

■ **Why isn't there a helpline for bullied young people?**
There is ChildLine, but I suppose that's more for other things. The key objective is to create a culture within a school where you feel safe, rather than a national helpline.

■ **Why isn't bullying illegal?**
We don't want a ten-year-old to become involved in the criminal justice system – we want them to apologise.

■ **Why doesn't the Government record bullying statistics?**
Every incident would have to be written down, even if you accidentally push someone in the corridor!

■ **Do you think politicians are good role models?**
Prime Minister's Question Time is rowdy and 'yahoo-y'. I accept it doesn't present us as good role models. The Speaker is always telling us off!

■ **What punishments should bullies get?**
Detention, apologising, doing extra work around school.

■ **Who needs more help – the bullies or bullied?**
I think the bullied, we need to make sure they get help.

■ **There are 24,372 schools in England. How do we get ABA into all of them?**
How many are we in now?

■ **Around 2,000.**
What do you think I should be doing?

■ **Adverts on TV and in newspapers such as First News. ABA going into local schools. More funding for training! Should schools do more to reduce cyberbullying?**
Yes! We've done quite a lot of things to educate young people about how to behave on the internet. The internet is new and we're still learning how to behave on it.

DON'T KEEP IT A SECRET

EVERY child should be able to enjoy life at school. If you're a victim of bullying, don't keep it to yourself.

Speak to someone you can trust, such as your parents, a teacher or your friends. Is bullying a problem that exists at your school? If so, why not talk to a teacher about the ABA programme? You can help to create a happy and safe school environment for you and your friends.

Taking action

So what creative schemes are ABA schools using to tackle bullies?

● Levenshulme High School, Manchester: a pledge against bullying is said before assembly, uniting the school.

● Drew Primary School, Newham: smile and compliment day.

● St Angela's Ursuline School, Newham: a photo booth to promote anti-bullying through positive slogans.

● Saddleworth School, Oldham: concerns box to anonymously report bullying.

Young person's view

"The best way to tackle bullying is to find out what motivates the bullies and act on that. We need to share the anti-bullying campaign – stop it being a secret and give students a voice!" Libby and Emily, 13, Saddleworth School.

Get involved!

To learn more about the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors Programme and the Diana Award, go to www.antibullyingpro.com.

BULLY FREE ZONE

Background

A recent poll by Action For Children found that one in seven kids have bullied someone else online. *First News* decided to take a look behind the headlines and ask why people choose to be mean to others.

There are several factors that determine whether a person is deliberately nasty to others or not. But do you think that enough is being done to stop online bullying and the causes of online bullying?

There are two main areas that can be addressed: what makes individuals bully other individuals, and the websites and apps that

the bullies operate on.

Can more be done by the owners of the websites and the internet service providers (ISPs), such as BT or Virgin Media? Or do we risk limiting freedom of speech if there are too many controls put on what people can and cannot do online?

Bullying has probably existed as long as humans have, but cyber bullying is a relatively new thing because the internet has only been commonly used by a majority in the UK since the late 1990s. Social media is even newer, with sites such as Facebook and

Twitter only taking off in the last eight years or so. It is possible that cyber bullying is something that will fade with time as people apply "real world" behaviour to their online behaviour and don't hide behind their monitors in order to stay anonymous. But for now the problem is real and serious and affects thousands of children's lives. Thankfully, it remains rare – only 12% of children say they have suffered online bullying, but this number is up from 7% four years ago.

Is it time that more action was taken to deal with cyber bullying?

The Dilemma — *Should more be done to stop online bullying?*

Kids online: Facts & Figures

A survey of 1,000 11-16 year-olds found that:

● 63% of young people agree that they are closer to their friends because of the internet.

● 47% of young people agree that the internet helps them be a better friend.

● 48% believe that it would be hard to maintain friendships without technology.

● 60% said they would be lonely if they couldn't talk to their friends via technology.

● 20% have told an adult about cyber bullying and 41% say they have stood up to someone who was being mean online.

● 82% of pre-teens think social media sites are safe, and 79% of parents agree, according to a

Cyber bullying is on the rise.

separate survey of US youngsters.

The Action for Children poll revealed that:

● 15% of 2,000 youngsters aged 8-17 had bullied someone online.

● 59% of those bullies did so to fit in with a particular social group, while 43% wanted to prevent themselves being bullied.

● 28% admitted becoming a bully due to peer pressure and 12% said they had done it because they were unhappy.

Young people online

EU Kids Online, a European project to investigate how children are using the internet, conducted research across 33 countries with children aged 9-16. Here are the top 10 online activities that European children do on a daily basis:

1) Visit a social networking site

2) Watch video clips

3) Use instant messaging

4) Use the internet for schoolwork

5) Play games with other people online

6) Download music or films

7) Post photos, music or videos to share with others

8) Visit a chatroom

9) Read or watch news

10) Post a message on a website

Examples of cyber bullying

● Emailing or texting threatening or nasty messages to people.
● Posting an embarrassing or humiliating video of someone on a video-hosting site such as YouTube or Vimeo.
● Harassing someone by repeatedly sending texts or instant messages in a chat room.
● Setting up profiles on social networking sites, such as Facebook, to make fun of someone.
● 'Happy slapping', which is when people use their mobiles to film and share videos of physical attacks.
● Posting or forwarding someone else's personal or private information or images without their permission.
● Deliberately sending viruses that can damage another person's computer.
● Making abusive comments about another user on a gaming site.

Source: NHS.

WEEKLY DEBATE

The Weekly Debate

The Dilemma — *Should more be done to stop online bullying?*

Should schoools do more to combat bullying?

Educating children both about what to do if they become the victims of cyber bullying and about why it's important not to be abusive could well be the key to reducing the problem. But according to a survey of 700 teachers last year: two thirds of them had seen pupils abusing and bullying each other on the internet; a little over 40% said they had never taught online safety, and a third said they felt out of their depth doing so.

In 2014, the government issued guidelines to schools and colleges on how to keep children safe online. All children in local authority-maintained schools must now be taught about internet safety from the age of five as part of the national curriculum.

But just months after government guidelines were introduced, the chairman of the House of Commons education select committee said that schools in England are failing in their efforts to teach children about the dangers of online abuse and trolling. The committee, made up of MPs from all parties, assesses the government's education policies. Graham Stuart, the committee's chairman, said, "Schools have a part to play in ensuring young people are safe and are kept away from the misery and depression which online abuse can bring about." The Department for Education, though, believes steps have already been taken to get schools teaching about online safety. They said:

"We expect schools to take firm action to tackle victimisation both on and offline. As with all forms of bullying, the best schools create an ethos to stop

**Can schools do more to teach about online safety?**

it from happening in the first place. We have given schools the power to search for, and if necessary, delete inappropriate images on electronic devices and are working with social networking sites and internet providers to make the internet a safer place for young people."

Can schools do more to tackle the causes of cyber bullying by getting to the root of the bullies' problems, as well as teaching why online abuse is so hurtful and damaging? If a bully is having problems at home, for example, is it the teacher's job to try to help them with that and therefore prevent he or she being abusive to others online? Whether bullying takes place on the internet or in the real world, if the causes are dealt with then the problem itself is dealt with. If somebody is sick, a doctor's job is to get rid of the illness (for example, a chest infection) which will in turn get rid of the symptoms (a cough or fever). If teachers and school counsellors were able to get to the bottom of the illness – i.e. why a bully bullies – perhaps the overall effect will be extremely positive both for the bully and the bullied.

Should the ISPs do more?

ISPs are the companies that provide your home and school with the internet. Companies such as BT, Virgin Media, Sky and TalkTalk are ISPs. Many of these now use internet filters so that users, especially children, cannot search for or access illegal or inappropriate material, but when it comes to cyber bullying the ISPs have a tougher task on their hands. If a law has been broken by somebody online, the police will often be able to identify the criminal by checking their Internet Protocol (IP) address. This is a specific and unique number assigned to any online device such as a laptop. With it, the police can locate the ISP who can then pass on the details of the user. But many cases of cyber bullying are not technically illegal, so there is only so much the ISP can do if the law has not been broken.
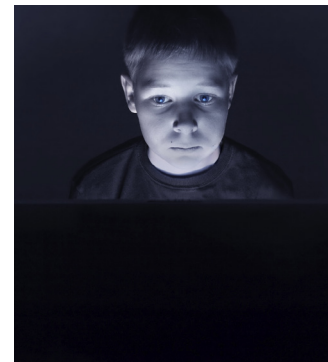
The Dilemma *Should more be done to stop online bullying?*

Should the websites do more?

Whenever there is a high-profile story of online bullying in the media, it is often the "host" of the bullies that gets the most criticism. For example, Twitter is regularly put under the spotlight due to the large number of trolls who abuse other users either because they disagree with their views or because they are simply looking to insult others.

All the main social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, Ask.fm, Instagram and YouTube are aware of the problem of cyber bullying and have taken measures to prevent it. In 2013, Twitter introduced a "Report abuse" button to flag individual tweets. Ask.fm, which was bought last year by the owners of the search engine Ask.com, has been heavily criticised in the past for not doing enough to combat cyber bullying. There have been numerous suicides linked to young people who were abused on Ask.fm, and the new owners were keen to point out that they intend to deal with cyber bullying on their network once and for all by spending "millions of dollars" on moderators and better detection systems for online abuse.

Some campaigners believe that stamping out cyber bullying is more important than privacy and that websites should take more steps taken to identify cases of bullying, either through human moderators checking content or by using software that "detects" abuse. They believe it should not always be up to the victim to speak out – especially as some children are embarrassed or shy about admitting they have been bullied online. The Action For Children survey found that nearly half of youngsters stayed quiet after seeing or reading something online that made them feel uncomfortable, rather than telling a grown-up. Around one in five children said they had kept quiet because they were scared of what a bully might do to them, while 17% said they were worried they would get into trouble if they told. If young people are too frightened to speak out, is it time the websites and apps themselves did more to prevent bullying?

On the other hand, it has been argued that policing websites is both difficult to do successfully and dangerous – some people think that moderators or computer software should not be allowed to read private messages or conversations. There is also the risk that software isn't advanced enough to tell the difference between harmful and harmless online behaviour.

Should parents do more?

According to a 2013 survey, 74% of the 1,300 parents quizzed had no idea what their kids were doing online. Parents are ultimately responsible for the wellbeing and safety of their children when they are not in school, so it could be said that mums and dads and other guardians should take a more active role in supervising their children's online activity. How would you feel if your parents oversaw your online activity and interactions with others? Would it make you feel safer or would it bother you?

Should parents keep a closer eye on what children do online?

Should children do less?

Many of us – including children – spend a lot of time online, especially now that smartphones and e-readers mean you can remain connected pretty much wherever you are. An American study found that young people spent, on average, six hours online a day. 95% had at least one social media account and 44% said they checked it constantly. Facebook policy is that you must be 13 to sign up for an account, but 22% of 9-10-year-olds and 53% of 12-year-olds admitted having a profile. Is the amount of time we all spend online, constantly refreshing our social media feeds, damaging our relationships with friends and family in the "real world", and our ability to interact with others? If we were to spend less time online, would that reduce the risk of cyber bullying or will the problem still exist, just in a slightly more hidden way?

The Dilemma
*Should more be done to stop online bullying?*

Quotes

"It's shocking that online bullying is so prevalent, but we must not lose sight of the fact that many of these children bully others because of something going wrong in their own lives, or being driven to it through fear of being bullied or socially shunned themselves. Low self-esteem, stress at school or being victimised themselves by peers or adults are all reasons a child might act out on others. It's important for parents to ask children about the day they've had online, just as they ask about the day they've had at school – whether your child is being bullied or bullying others, the problem, and any potentially more severe issues surrounding it, must be addressed." – Deanna Neilson, head of child protection at Action For Children.

"Using the curriculum – in PHSE, citizenship as well as IT – to educate children and young people about the possibilities and potential pitfalls of social media and the internet is an effective way of ensuring that the issues relating to cyber bullying are discussed more openly within the school community." – Christine Blower, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, the largest teachers' union.

Questions

1. Do you think cyber bullying is a big problem?

2. Would you be happy for parents/teachers to supervise all your online activity?

3. Do you think that supervision would make you feel safer?

4. Have you witnessed cyber bullying?

5. Should bullies be helped and counselled to stop them bullying, or do you think they should just be punished?

6. What more can the websites/apps do to prevent cyber bullying?

**7.** What more can schools do to prevent cyber bullying?
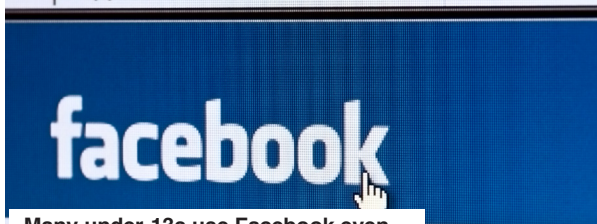
Many under-13s use Facebook even though the network doesn't allow it.

Glossary

ISPs – Internet Service Providers. The companies that provide you with broadband internet in your home, school or place of work.

Internet filters – Software that can monitor web content viewed on a particular computer or network. Internet filters are often used to help parents manage who kids can communicate with, what websites they can access or how long kids can use the computer.
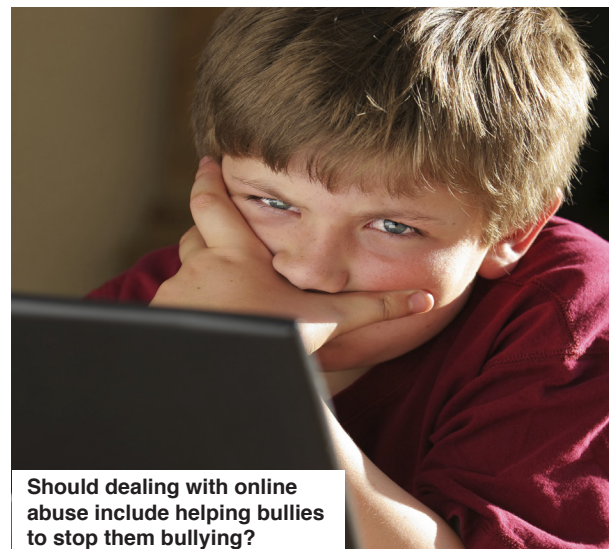
Should dealing with online abuse include helping bullies to stop them bullying?

The Dilemma — *Should more be done to stop online bullying?*

I think there **should/shouldn't** be more monitoring of what is written or uploaded online for the following reasons:

1.

2.

3.

I think parents and teachers **should/shouldn't** do more to stop online bullying for the following reasons:

1.

2.

3.

TAKING ACTION
I think the following actions could be taken to prevent online bullying:

My reasoned opinion

The dillema: Should more be done to stop online bullying?

In my opinion, I think **enough/not enough** is being done to reduce bullying online at the moment, my reasons are:

-
-
-