

Audit tool

Online lives: responding to clients' needs

A framework for good practice



safe & sound

Dudley's Community Safety Partnership

Youthworks

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The aims are

To integrate an understanding of the online life of the young person into the support they receive from agencies

To support early intervention through identification of risk

To support the training of frontline services

To deliver a holistic service to young people in need or at risk of harm

Introduction

Since 2008 we have annually collected young people's online experiences. The Cybersurvey now has 35,000 responses from 10-16 year olds. It charts the rapidly changing digital world they inhabit. This audit tool grew out of the yearly reports and research. While most young people are fairly resilient online, ask an adult or get help from a friend, others are especially vulnerable. They include children and young people with emotional or mental health difficulties along with young carers, looked after children and those with learning or communication difficulties, SEN or disability. Young people reveal a new digital divide: those who are relatively safe online and those who are very unsafe.¹ Without the ability to stay safe online children are denied the opportunities that the internet and new technology can offer whilst also being at risk of multiple and often simultaneous harms.

This generation knows no difference between on or offline – their lives are lived in both spheres simultaneously. However, many services working to help our most troubled children and young people need to understand their clients' online lives: the content they are exposed to, the contacts they make and the way they are behaving. They may be exploited, hacked, insulted, humiliated or harmed. Few tell anyone. Many are threatened and secrecy is demanded. Those already in poor emotional health, lacking confidence or belief in the future, can find their difficulties exacerbated by digital life - others feel tired, depressed or listless after hours online. Some can feel they never measure up to the social media 'template' of beauty, to be cool, popular and thin.

Our recent needs assessment showed that few services working with young people had worthwhile data on the number of cases with online components they saw, or lacked data on the types of cases. They did not have dedicated assessment tools, staff training or data sharing between agencies. They often felt: 'It seems there are many more such cases recently, but we don't have figures.' Brown et al (2016) found that few CSE assessment tools are based on evidence,² while Ofsted (2014)³ pointed out a lack of consistency in the completion of CSE risk assessments. There is an argument for taking a new look at this issue. This audit tool is a collaborative effort to develop what is needed, in order to incorporate the online lives of clients into practice.

¹ 2017 El Asam, A. & Katz, A. New Digital Divide: Vulnerable Young People and Online Harm (In preparation).

² Brown et al (2016) found many tools are in use in the UK, 'the majority are based on a limited evidence base and have not been evaluated or tested using large-scale, methodologically rigorous research.' Brown S., Brady, G, Franklin, A. Bradley, L, Kerrigan, N & Sealey C., CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION: UNDERSTANDING RISK AND VULNERABILITY, Coventry University and EIF, funded by the Home Office.

³ The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it? Thematic Report.

Intertwined...

Mental health is a continuum along which Children and Young People move both up and down. Emotional Well Being impacts much more broadly than those exhibiting specific problems.

Emotional wellbeing can influence responses to online content, online experiences and pressures, impulsive behaviour, sensation seeking and excessive self-promotion or self-censoring. It can influence how people behave in response to praise, coercion or humiliation. It influences addiction, obsession and fears.

Without understanding a young person's online life, treatment or support is only going to tackle a fragment of their life, while the online life may dominate.

A young person's online life can in turn exacerbate emotional problems, feelings of anxiety, depression or isolation that are already present.

Vulnerable children and young people may be particularly negatively affected by online encounters or enabled by technology to view extreme material, violence, pornography or dangerous advice. Grooming, incitement and threats find ready victims in those who are not resilient.

But young people with emotional problems can also be helped by positive online experiences, appropriate calming or supportive online programmes, creativity and achievement and the community of like-minded others.



Definitions - what do we mean?

Child Sexual Exploitation

'... exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive "something" (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example

being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/ or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.'

(National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People: 2015).

Sexting or sharing of intimate self-generated images

Sexting refers to images or videos generated

- By children under the age of 18 or
- Of children under the age of 18 that are of a sexual nature or indecent

It is illegal to possess or share intimate images of anyone under 18. Many teenagers unknowingly share intimate images within relationships or for fun, with no negative consequence, but the risks of their images being harvested, misused or distributed are very high. Some report blackmail, extortion and other threats in connection with sexting. In the context of a manipulative relationship, sexting may be a tool to control or a means to an end.

The high risk online scenarios studied in our analysis:

The commonly used '4Cs' terms were used and the selected high risk scenarios grouped as below:

CONTENT	CONTACT	CONDUCT	COMMERCE
<p>(Often)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Visiting pro-anorexia websites; <p>Often coming across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Nude pictures you did not search for; ●Very violent images or videos that you did not want to see; ●Websites promoting hatred or racist views; ●Websites giving advice you think might be dangerous. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Social media pages/account hacked; ●Personal details hacked or stolen; ●Experienced online aggression including racism and homophobia; ●(Often) visited websites encouraging self-harm or suicide; ●Been cyberbullied ●Been approached/solicited by someone posing as youth but not genuine. 	<p>(Often)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●I visit gambling sites ●I use chatrooms and forums; ●I look at pages meant for adults; ●I spend more than 5 hours per day online; <p>I go online for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Gaming; ●Posting photos; ●Posting about what I am doing; <p>SGII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●I have shared an SGII ●I was pressured or blackmailed into sending the photo; ●I was tricked into sharing the photo; ●I shared the photo because I received threats; ●I was in a relationship and wanted to share it; ●I just tried it for fun; <p>After I shared this photo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●I was threatened or bullied because of a nude; ●I was blackmailed and told to send more photos; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●I have had credit card details stolen; ●I've been tricked into paying for something online I did not want; ●Been tricked into buying fake goods; ●Encountered website/s 'trying to sell you stuff that might be illegal.'

Which young people were most vulnerable online in our analysis?

Social/Family	Communication difficulties	Physical disabilities	SEN	Mental health
<p>Young Carers</p> <p>Children and young people in or leaving care</p> <p>Young people with experience of <i>both</i> LAC and being a young carer.</p>	<p>Those who said: 'I need help with English'</p> <p>or</p> <p>had speech</p> <p>or</p> <p>hearing difficulties</p>	<p>I have:</p> <p>A physical disability</p> <p>Vision difficulties</p> <p>Long standing illness</p>	<p>I have:</p> <p>Learning difficulties</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Other forms of SEN</p>	<p>I have a mental health difficulty</p>



How to use the audit tool

Each section includes 6 key questions to enable services to assess their leadership, processes, data management, assessment tools and staff training.

- 0** Not at all/never/no evidence for this
 - 1** Very little/very infrequently/very little evidence available
 - 2** To some extent/sometimes/some evidence available
 - 3** To a considerable extent/ often/ good evidence available
 - 4** Always/to a great extent/strong evidence available
-



‘I never told anyone about what was happening to me online’

Data

Why do we need good data?

The overall lack of data contributes to the lack of strategic planning. If trends are not tracked, it is not possible to change the approach to address new or emerging trends which arrive with rapidity in the digital age. Nor is it possible to evaluate effectiveness year on year.

Training suffers if there is no data to use when planning and developing appropriate training or update programmes. Education messages might be out of date without data on current trends or young people's experience of the Conduct, Content, Contact and Commerce online risks.

Services suggested that data on referrals with an online component would only be retrieved from case file reviews and the general risk assessment processes if needed. This would take many staff hours to do. Poor IT systems were mentioned as compounding this problem while 'not collecting the necessary detail' was mentioned by one service. Generally services were using assessment tools that aim to identify CSE. None had specific tools to identify online problems.

Of course data or assessment tools alone cannot be relied upon to identify CSE or online safeguarding issues. Practitioners and professionals require their own discernment, discretion and skills in addition to good data. But it does help to be aware of patterns in the evidence or new trends emerging in youth culture.

The lack of data leaves a gaping hole in strategic planning.

'It feels as though there are many more such cases recently, but we don't have any data.'

2. Staff training

Statements	Score	Evidence	QA
2.1			
2.2			
2.3			
2.4			
2.5			
2.6			

'It was coming at me all day and night on my phone and on Ogle, Instagram, Yellow, Oovoo and Facebook.'



3. Assessment tools

Statements		Score	Evidence	QA
3.1	We use a specific assessment tool that adequately captures information about clients' online lives in order to aid our understanding of the case.			
3.2	We have tools or questions for use during treatment/ support that identify information about our clients' online lives to aid our understanding of the case.			
3.3	We have appropriate mechanisms to use during therapy /support that signal a client is at risk of significant harm online			
3.4	The assessment tools we use identify vulnerable children and young people who are particularly susceptible to online harm (vulnerable groups*).			
3.5	Assessment tools we use are based on evidence and have been evaluated.			
3.6	Assessment tools are easy to use and understood by the team			

*Research has identified children and young people who are young carers; in or leaving care; have a learning difficulty; have a communication difficulty such as speech, hearing impairment or language difficulty; who have emotional difficulties; who have mental health difficulties; are isolated or cyberbullied, as more likely to experience high risk online scenarios. If four or more of these factors are present, we recommend that this person is flagged up for intensive support. If they have been identified as having problems with Contact, Conduct, Content or Commerce it can be predicted that they are likely to also have problems with the other categories of risk.

4. Data sharing

Statements		score	Evidence	QA
4.1	We have information- sharing systems with other agencies to safeguard children and young people which include clients' online behaviours or experiences.			
4.2	When cases are referred to us we check on what is known of the child or young person's online life			
4.3	Selected information is shared with parents/carers of children and young people who are at risk of online harm.			
4.4	Other agencies share data with us to enable us to be aware of new trends and behaviours or online threats.			
4.5	Data protection systems are compliant and strong.			
4.6	Data on cases is fully anonymised if used in training.			

'He threatened to send my photos to everyone - he said he would hurt my sister if I did not send more. I could not sleep or eat.'



5. Safeguarding

Statements		Score	Evidence	QA
5.1	We can pick up cases that are online safety safeguarding matters through our assessment tool and in-practice mechanisms.			
5.2	We have tools in place to assess a client's online life for risk of significant harm.			
5.3	Our staff are all trained to save evidence appropriately.			
5.4	Our staff are all trained in a professional code of conduct that covers dealing with content sent to or by a client.			
5.5	Our staff are aware of the types of sites giving dangerous advice to young people. Content can include but not exclusively: pro-ana sites, suicide or self-harm sites, sites carrying incitement to hatred, dangerous drugs or illegal goods, promoting gambling, sexual partners and dating sites for adults.			
5.6	Our staff are aware of who to approach for assistance in safeguarding cases.			

New cases of 'sextortion' target specific groups in the population to extract extreme humiliation and compliance.



6. Working with parents/carers

Statements		Score	Evidence	QA
6.1	We are confident giving advice and support to parents/carers of regarding the online lives of our clients.			
6.2	We understand or know of common parental controls and can advise parents/carers			
6.3	We are aware of age limits on apps and social media sites, games and TV content.			
6.4	We can support parents by signposting them to helpful sites			
6.5	We can signpost clients to positive online programmes, advice lines or sites that offer support			
6.6	We are aware of the types of difficulty children and young people are experiencing online or via their mobile phones, gaming consoles or other connected devices such as webcams and take steps to update our team			

'I wish my child had talked to me about the trouble he was in. Instead I did not know what was happening to him online. He thought I'd take away his phone if I knew.'



Case examples

These scenarios can help when thinking about how your service would address a case of this type.

Case 1

Selina had recently broken up with her boyfriend. Both were 15. He shared intimate images of her with friends online. Selina, already distressed due the breakup became extremely depressed and anxious, she began to self-harm as the weeks went by and was angry and aggressive at home.

The school investigated at the time and got Selina's boyfriend to apologise. They addressed the whole year group and insisted that sharing images of this nature of under 18's was illegal. People were urged to delete any images in circulation. Selina found it almost impossible to attend school. She withdrew and became seriously ill. Her parents were not satisfied with the outcome, even though Selina accepted her boyfriend's apology. They took the case to the police. When the police investigated they found that Selina's boyfriend had been coerced into asking her for nude photos by his stepfather. The boy had not told anyone. The photos were being misused.

If you were treating Selina for her self-harm and other difficulties, what would you need to know of her past and current online life?

Case 2

Sairah was forbidden by her mother to use an app that allowed anonymity. She used it to communicate with someone she believed genuinely cared for her. But she was being manipulated. The 'boyfriend' told her how to delete the app each day and re-install it every night so that they could continue chatting and sharing images. He persuaded her to meet him but she was very shocked by the encounter and realised he was not who he said he was. She ran away from home in fear of her parents finding out.

There was no trace in Sairah's phone account of these encounters. The app provided free chat and bypassed her account.

Would your practice help you to uncover a high risk scenario such as this and prevent further harm?

Notes

Helplines and services that can help

[The Mix](#) (formerly Get Connected) call on 0808 808 4994.

Kooth

Youth Access

Useful Documents:

[Sexist Bullying Guidance](#)

[Sexist Bullying Quick Guide](#)

[Teen Abuse Toolkit](#)

[Guidance on teaching about consent](#)

[DCSF Safe to Learn, Sexist, Sexual and Transphobic bullying](#)

Family Lives runs [TeenBoundaries](#) workshops for schools and youth groups to prevent sexual bullying, peer on peer sexual exploitation and promotes positive gender relationships by challenging attitudes and promoting tolerance, understanding and cohesion between young people.

[Persona Dolls](#) are a useful resource for educators who wish to explore emotions, relationships, bullying, fears and other concerns with young children. The programme includes a range of dolls and a book with stories to use or adapt.

Essential Documents

[Keeping children safe in education 2016](#)

[The Prevent Duty](#)

[Equality Act 2010, Guidance](#)

[Update your AUP download pdf](#) (schools)

[Serious Incident Protocol download pdf](#)

The KEEP Checklist (Known Elements of Effective Prevention). The KEEP Checklist was based on a systematic review of youth prevention education research (Jones, Mitchell, & Walsh, 2015). The checklist identifies five basic prevention education characteristics that have been shown to be critical to effectiveness across many areas of youth prevention (drug abuse, mental health problems, aggression, delinquency, school drop-out, bullying, sexual abuse, etc.). The five elements are: 1) a structured curriculum or lessons; 2) skill-based learning objectives; 3) active participant involvement and learning; 4) an adequate program dose; and 5) additional learning opportunities

About parental controls

Microsoft Support [Windows 10](#) Parental Controls allow families to set up individual accounts for each person with age appropriate selections. These can be changed as the child develops.

Ipads – it is possible to create individual accounts so that for a child, games and TV content can be downloaded to the tablet and the child can play with it in airplane mode

NSPCC and Internet Matters [Service provider parental controls](#)

Equality

The incitement of hate

Race, Religion, or Sexual Orientation

Stirring up hatred against people because of their race, or because of religious beliefs or sexual orientation, in the form of making or publishing certain kinds of threatening statement is one boundary to freedom of expression and a crime. Young people may be experiencing online incitement of hatred personally or view it being directed at others.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination (whether direct or indirect) against people who possess one of the protected characteristics. It also prohibits the harassment and victimisation of such people. The act contains a general duty and specific public sector equality duties. All services, while being aware of their obligations under the act, will also need to consider their clients' online experiences in this regard. [Introduction to the Equality Act 2010](#). Vulnerable young people identified in this analysis reported high rates of online racial, religious and homophobic abuse.

Thresholds, early intervention and targeting assessments

Setting thresholds to initiate an assessment may depend on the interaction of a number of factors. Studies suggest that these include:

- the nature and quality of the information available relating to the individual and family who are the subject of a referral;
- the practitioners' approaches to analysing that information
- the procedures for handling referrals
- systems and organisational factors (for example, the level of resources available, perceived pressures to ration demand for services, time constraints and the requirements of case management procedures and systems).⁴

It is helpful to be objective about influences that might affect these decisions. There is no assessment tool that can take the place of skilled professional judgement, but what we are proposing here is the collection of a wider range of relevant information that reflects the online lives of young people so that this can be considered alongside other known factors that might render them vulnerable to harm. We argue that it is the intersection of these adversities which appears to multiply the impacts on children and young people who may already be experiencing mental health difficulties, social/family difficulties, communication difficulties disability or special needs.

Limited resources and pressure of work generally result in raised thresholds for access to services (Brandon et al., 2008;⁵ Sheppard, 2009a⁶) however the study by Katz and El Asam suggests that, as a prevention strategy, certain vulnerable young people could be targeted with intensive support to make their online lives safer and help reduce demand.

Youthworkers, care workers, social workers, online safety school educators and counselling services are only a few of those who could become involved.

However to plan a council wide strategy and training programme, it requires a greater knowledge of the frequency and types of cases services are seeing.

Adrienne Katz and Cathy Street.

⁴ Social work assessment of children in need: what do we know? Messages from research. Danielle Turney, Dendy Platt, Julie Selwyn and Elaine Farmer School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. 2011

⁵ Brandon, M., Belderson, P., Warren, C., Howe, D., Gardner, R., Dodsworth, J and Black, J (2008) *Analysing Child Deaths and Serious Injury through Abuse and Neglect: What Can We Learn? A biennial analysis of serious case reviews 2003-2005*. Research Report DCSF-RR023. University of East Anglia;

⁶ Sheppard, M. (2009). High thresholds and prevention in children's services – the impact of mothers' coping strategies on outcome of child and parenting problems: A six-month follow-up. *British Journal of Social Work*, 39 (1): 46–63

**The audit tool: Online lives, responding to young clients' lives.
By Youthworks Consulting For Dudley MBC**