

Cyberbullying

The UK government¹ has published new guidelines on dealing with cyberbullying. This article looks at some of the background statistics often quoted in UK research reports about young people being bullied when using electronic devices.

In 2002 NCH reported being the first children's organisation in the world publicly to identify text bullying as a new and very modern problem.² NCH carried out a survey of 856 people aged between 11 and 19 which discovered that:

- ▷ One in four (25%) 11 to 19 year olds in the UK has been bullied or threatened via their mobile phone or PC
- ▷ A total of 16% said they'd received bullying or threatening text messages
- ▷ 29% said they'd told no one about being bullied
- ▷ Of the 69% who did tell someone - 42% turned to a friend; 32% turned to a parent

In 2003 Oliver and Candappa researched bullying with nearly 1,200 Year 5 and Year 8 pupils.³ They found that, "Although the numbers (Year 8 pupils) were small, it would appear that bullying by electronic communication is emerging as a new form of bullying: 4% (N=33) reported that they had received nasty text messages and 2% (N=17) reported that they had received nasty e-mail messages."

The Schools Health Education Unit⁴ in its annual report found that, in 2003, 2% of nearly 10,000 Year 6 (10-11 year olds) reported being bullied through their mobile phone.

A survey compiled by the NSPCC and 'Sugar' Magazine in 2005, looked at cyberbullying in relation to girls. Their report was based on replies from 992 teenage girl readers of 'Sugar' magazine across 11 regions in the U.K., and the average age of respondents was 15. Text messaging was a form of bullying, with 13% of respondents saying they had sent nasty text messages and emails, and nearly half had received nasty or threatening text messages or emails.

NCH continued its research into text bullying in 2005. A total of 770 youngsters aged 11 to 19 were questioned in the mobile bullying survey.⁵ Findings included:

- ▷ One in five (20%) 11 to 19 year olds had experienced some sort of bullying or threat via email, internet chatroom or text. Some experienced more than one

- ▷ Text bullying was the most significant form of bullying at 14%. This was followed by internet chatrooms at 5% and 4% via email
- ▷ 73% who had been bullied or threatened said they knew the person who bullied or threatened them, while 26% said it was a stranger
- ▷ 28% did not tell anyone and 41% of those bullied told a friend. 24% spoke to a parent and 14% to a teacher
- ▷ 11% admitted they had sent a bullying or threatening message to someone else

Research in 2005 by the Unit for School and Family Studies, Goldsmiths College, was carried out for the Anti-Bullying Alliance.⁶ 92 pupils aged from 11 to 16 year olds, came from 14 London schools.

Findings included:

- ▷ Up to one in five pupils have experienced bullying on mobile phones or via the internet
- ▷ 20 students (22%) had experienced cyber bullying at least once and 5 students (6.6%) had experienced being bullied in this way more frequently in the previous two months
- ▷ Phone calls, text messaging and emailing were the most common forms of cyber bullying both inside and outside of school, while chat-room bullying was the least common. The prevalence of cyber bullying was greater outside school than in school
- ▷ There were no significant differences related simply to age, but girls were significantly more likely to be cyber bullied than boys - especially by text messages and phone calls
- ▷ Students were most aware of bullying by picture/video clips (46%), followed by phone calls (37%) and text messaging (29%)
- ▷ 10 students (12%) were aware of chat-room bullying
- ▷ Bullying using phone picture and video clips and phone calls were perceived as having more impact on the victim than traditional forms of bullying
- ▷ Most pupils thought banning mobile phones would result in pupils using them secretly and that restricting private Internet use in school could not prevent cyber bullying outside school

In 2005 Becta commissioned a report⁷ based on a survey of 444 schools, in-depth interviews with 61 teachers and a survey of 25 English Local Education Authorities. Findings included:

"... the majority of teachers participating in this research (87%) reported that their educational establishments did not encounter any incidents of bullying via mobile phone in an average month. 11% of teachers reported that they encountered between one and five incidents and very small proportions (less than 1%) that they encountered more than 11 incidents of bullying via mobile phone in an average month." (p.66)

"Teachers reported that incidents of bullying via mobile phones had occurred predominantly in the latter year groups of each school sector (Year 6 and Year 10)."

"...bullying by mobile phone is more likely to occur, and to occur more frequently, in educational establishments which permit pupils to bring their mobile phones onto the premises. A clear gender divide was found, with teachers reporting that incidents of bullying via mobile phone were more likely to occur amongst girls than boys." (p.70)

"...15.5% of teachers did report that they encountered between one and five such incidents (bullying via websites, chat rooms or email) in their educational establishment in an average month. However the majority of teachers, 83%, reported that they were not aware of the existence of any such incidents."

In summary: 2% of 10,000 10-11 year olds report mobile phone bullying; Up to 25% of around 1,500 11-19 year olds report some form of bullying by electronic devices; 87% of teachers said their institution did not encounter any incidents of mobile phone bullying; 83% of teachers were not aware of any bullying by websites, chat rooms or email; 14% of the 770 11-19 year olds being cyber bullied told a teacher.

References

The weblinks can be found at www.sheu.org.uk/publications/ehfreearticles.htm

- 1 www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying
- 2 www.nch.org.uk/information/index.php?i=237
- 3 www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR400.pdf
- 4 www.sheu.org.uk/howeworkwith/pdfs/yp04bully.pdf
- 5 www.nch.org.uk/uploads/documents/Mobile_bullying_%20report.pdf
- 6 www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk
- 7 <http://partners.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=rh&rid=11302>