Inclusion and digital wellbeing
Teacher Summary Sheet

Risk of harm online

Circumstances or characteristics can increase a young person’s risk of harm online in specific ways. An increased risk can be permanent, temporary or situational, for example:

- Young people with a disability may be more likely to have contact with strangers online.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people are less likely to report negative online experiences.
- LGBTI young people may be more likely to experience online abuse and hate speech.
- Young people in domestic violence situations may be more likely to experience digital surveillance.
- Young people in out-of-home care may be more vulnerable to grooming.

Protective strategies

The Beyond Blue – Building resilience in children aged 0-12 practice guide encourages people working with children to build targeted support into universal interventions:

- Individual interventions and support – strengthening the individual, such as through skill development.
- Universal interventions – whole school and classroom strategies, such as social and emotional learning programs.

Strategies for protecting the online rights of diverse young people can include:

- The inclusion of diverse role models and voices in education communications.
- Protecting access and participation in online activity for all students.
- Recognising the important of online relationships as an avenue for support.
- Developing help-seeking behaviour and the ability to report online issues.

Young people with a disability

Australian Network on Disability reports that 18% of the population live with a disability. People with a disability may experience the following:

- Bullying – research by Autism Spectrum Australia and Dorothy Espelage, reports that young people with disabilities are twice as likely to be involved in a bullying incident.
- Gaming – eSafety research on youth and online gaming, shows gaming is more popular among youth with a disability (72%) than those without (63%).
- Contact with strangers – eSafety research on youth, kids and digital dangers, reports that 50% of young people with a disability have talked to someone they don’t know online.
A strength-based approach to reducing harm

eSafety research on youth, kids and digital dangers\(^7\), shows 72% of young people with a disability actively manage their social media presence, compared to 67% of other social media users. Emphasising these strengths as well as providing targeted support, is the best strategy to reduce harm and promote wellbeing.

Strength-based approaches that support young people with disabilities online include:

- Recognising and appreciating students' current online safety skills and strengths.
- Nurturing critical thinking skills and a realistic awareness of online risks.
- Encouraging all students to use accessibility features to make online spaces more inclusive.

Keeping young people with disability safer online

Social media with artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence is being used to tackle bullying on Instagram. Customising the keyword filter\(^8\) can hide comments containing specific words, phrases, numbers or emojis. Go to 'settings', 'comment controls', 'custom keywords.'

Promote accessibility features

Explore the accessibility features available on social media with all students. This could include:

- Altering the alt text (audio descriptive text) for Instagram images.
- Keeping hashtags at the end of comments so they are easier for screen-readers to read.

This post on Accessible Social Media\(^9\) by the University of Minnesota has more tips.

Use new technologies

Voice command technologies can make the internet more accessible for some users. Consider online safety when using these devices, for example:

- Don't use the voice assistant to remember sensitive information.
- Set up the device to exclude explicit content.
- Keep software and password security up-to-date.

Explore diverse role models from both inside and outside the school

Social media can be a great place to find diverse and inspiring young people. Some examples include:

- Monique Murphy\(^10\) – a Paralympic swimmer who shares her experience of using a prosthetic leg.
- Madeline Stuart\(^11\) – a model who shares her experience as a person with Down Syndrome.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

The Australian Human Rights Commission reports that around 3% of the Australian population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Research by Macquarie University into Cyberbullying and Indigenous Australians shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use and experience technology in culturally specific ways. Their experiences might include:

- Technology used to promote cultural values such as openness and sharing.
- Platform features causing offence or disrespect, such as the memorialisation of profiles on Facebook.
- A greater incidence of racism or online hate.

Strategies that can support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people online include:

- Using culturally appropriate programming such as the eSafety Be Deadly Online resource which uses contextually relevant examples and language.
- Recognising and emphasising cultural strengths such as the value placed on openness and sharing.
- Honouring traditional social structures when resolving online conflicts for example, supporting elders to understand the technology so they can mediate social issues.

LGBTI young people

The Australian Human Rights Commission found 11% of the general population identify as LGBTI. Young people who identify as LGBTI may experience additional vulnerabilities online, for example:

- eSafety’s social cohesion research shows that 37% of 16-17 year-olds have seen or heard inappropriate material targeting LGBTI people online.
- Research by Dorothy Espelage looks at bullying in early high school (largely driven using homophobic slurs) as a precursor to sexual harassment in later years.

Strategies that support LGBTI young people online include:

- Taking reports of homophobic bullying online seriously and discussing its impacts with all students. Go to the Student Wellbeing Hub for more information and resources.
- Encouraging students who are feeling isolated to seek information and support from online sources.Minus18 has resources to support young, LGBTI people.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The ‘Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse’ in its Making institutions child safe report, states: ‘There is some indication that children who are vulnerable to harm online are often already at risk offline. In such instances, digital media tends to serve as a tool to facilitate or aggravate an existing problem.’

Strategies that support young people at a higher risk of online abuse include:

- Teaching students how to identify inappropriate contact from other people and strangers.
- Agreeing to strategies for preventing unregulated contact from birth parents or relatives where the young person is in out of home care.
• Having regular conversations about what they do and who they talk to online.
• Encouraging students to have more than one person to talk to about online safety concerns.

eSafety’s ‘Keep it Sweet Online’\(^{21}\) slide deck is a good way to start a protective conversation with students in the lower years of primary school.

References


\(^{2}\)and.org.au/pages/disability-statistics.html

\(^{3}\)autismspectrum.org.au/sites/default/files/Factsheet_Tackling%20bullying_20170313_1.pdf


\(^{8}\)help.instagram.com/700284123459336

\(^{9}\)accessibility.umn.edu/tutorials/accessible-social-media

\(^{10}\)instagram.com/mon.murphy/?hl=en

\(^{11}\)instagram.com/madelinesmodelling_/ /


\(^{14}\)esafety.gov.au/education-resources/classroom-resources/be-deadly-online


\(^{18}\)studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/

\(^{19}\)minus18.org.au/


\(^{21}\)esafety.gov.au/education-resources/classroom-resources/stand-alone-lesson-plans-for-primary-schools