

# 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](#)<sup>1</sup> 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](#)<sup>2</sup> reports that 18% of the population live with a disability. People with a disability may experience the following:

- Bullying – research by [Autism Spectrum Australia](#)<sup>3</sup> and [Dorothy Espelage](#)<sup>4</sup>, 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](#)<sup>5</sup>, 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](#)<sup>6</sup>, 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](#)<sup>7</sup>, 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](#)<sup>8</sup> 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](#)<sup>9</sup> 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](#)<sup>10</sup> – a Paralympic swimmer who shares her experience of using a prosthetic leg.
- [Madeline Stuart](#)<sup>11</sup> – a model who shares her experience as a person with Down Syndrome.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

The [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)<sup>12</sup> reports that around 3% of the Australian population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Research by Macquarie University into [Cyberbullying and Indigenous Australians](#)<sup>13</sup> 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](#)<sup>14</sup> 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](#)<sup>15</sup> 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](#)<sup>16</sup> research shows that 37% of 16-17 year-olds have seen or heard inappropriate material targeting LGBTI people online.
- [Research by Dorothy Espelage](#)<sup>17</sup> 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](#)<sup>18</sup> for more information and resources.
- Encouraging students who are feeling isolated to seek information and support from online sources. [Minus18](#)<sup>19</sup> 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](#)<sup>20</sup>, 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'<sup>21</sup> slide deck is a good way to start a protective conversation with students in the lower years of primary school.

## References

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- <sup>3</sup>[autismspectrum.org.au/sites/default/files/Factsheet\\_Tackling%20bullying\\_20170313\\_1.pdf](https://autismspectrum.org.au/sites/default/files/Factsheet_Tackling%20bullying_20170313_1.pdf)
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