



# Responding to online safety incidents

An esafety professional learning presentation for schools. (Notes)



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## Why was this guide produced?

This two-part guide is designed to help schools deliver online safety professional learning to staff. During the session, staff work through potential scenarios and develop responses to online incidents. Suggested solutions have not been included as the approach to resolving the problem presented in each scenario may vary depending on the school context. In formulating solutions, consider a strengths-based approach that focuses on acknowledging and enhancing student capabilities and addressing deficits, rather than focusing solely on the incident at hand.

The presentation slides and scenario cards can be used in a workshop format, during staff meetings or at a planning day. These are intended to prompt shared discussion about effective responses to online incidents. The scenarios cover issues that might arise in both primary and secondary schools.

To start, download eSafety's [Respond – Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#) and [Respond – Quick reference guides for responding to online safety incidents](#) and distribute these to session participants. These guides will help participants complete the activities, supported by other eSafety Toolkit resources as needed, particularly those in the Respond element.

## Presenter notes for Presentation 1

Slide	Notes for presenter	Timing
1. Responding to online safety incidents.	<p>This professional learning presentation was developed by eSafety and is designed to help schools respond to online safety incidents. We're going to spend time working through this together.</p> <p><b>At end of this presentation, you will have:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• greater knowledge of the types of online issues faced by students</li><li>• greater understanding of how to respond to incidents</li><li>• greater knowledge of eSafety resources that schools can use when responding to incidents</li><li>• identified steps for reporting content to the eSafety Commissioner</li><li>• reflected on current practice, and how it can inform future practice.</li></ul> <p><b>Content warning:</b> This presentation will include discussion about online safety incidents. As with child protection training, this material is important for you to know about, and you are encouraged to take care with yourself and others and reach out to school and/or sector support services as needed.</p>	5 min

<p><b>2. Setting the context</b></p>	<p><b>Opening/formative questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is online safety important at our/this school?</li> <li>• Has anyone responded to an online safety incident at school in the past 12 months? Without sharing identifying details, can you describe the type of incident?</li> <li>• Who is aware of eSafety’s reporting schemes?</li> </ul> <p><b>eSafety has four reporting schemes. Show the participants the eSafety homepage and where to find the ‘report abuse’ portal. Explore the following:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Cyberbullying:</b> eSafety has a cyberbullying complaint function for Australians under 18-years old who have been seriously cyberbullied (this applies to our students).</li> <li>2. <b>Adult cyber abuse:</b> There is also an adult cyber abuse complaint function for Australians over 18-years old who have experienced seriously harmful online abuse (this applies to our school staff).</li> <li>3. <b>Image-based abuse:</b> Australians can also report the non-consensual sharing, or threatened sharing, of intimate/explicit image (this applies to our students and staff but in different ways).</li> <li>4. <b>Illegal and restricted content:</b> eSafety also takes reports about illegal and harmful content like child sexual abuse material and abhorrent violent material.</li> </ol>	<p>10 min</p>
<p><b>3. What are some of our most common online safety issues?</b></p>	<p>Ask the group what they think the most common online safety issues are for students in our school. Do you think these issues are the same or different in other schools?</p> <p><b>You might like to compare our school’s responses with eSafety’s 2025 research findings. The most common negative online experiences reported by young people (10 to 17 years):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44% had seen things online that encourage unhealthy eating or exercise (34% in the past 12 months).</li> <li>• 38% had someone say hurtful things to them online (23% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 39% had seen online hate against people with a specific skin colour, race or culture at some point (28% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 36% had seen online hate against people with specific religious beliefs (26% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 35% had seen online hate against women or girls (24% in the past 12 months); 24% had seen online hate against men or boys (16% in the past 12 months); 38% had seen online hate against people who are not straight or heterosexual (28% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 32% had seen sexual images or videos online (23% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 27% had seen things online that show or encourage illegal drug taking (20% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 22% had seen extreme real-life violence online (15% in the past 12 months)</li> </ul>	<p>5 min</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19% had seen things online that suggest how a person can hurt or kill themselves on purpose (12% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 16% were sent or tagged in offensive or upsetting photos or videos (9% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 11% had humiliating or hurtful photos or videos of them shared online (5% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 12% had felt worried or scared because someone kept sending them messages, calling them, or posting on their social media page, and they wouldn't stop even when asked to.</li> <li>• 8% had their exact real-time location tracked by someone using an app or a device without their permission.</li> <li>• 7% had humiliating or hurtful fake photos or videos made of them and shared online (3% in the past 12 months)</li> <li>• 7% had a fake online identity or profile made of them, without their permission (4% in the past 12 months)</li> </ul> <p>Source: <a href="#">The online experiences of children in Australia</a>, eSafety Commissioner (August 2025).</p>	
<p><b>4. Activity</b></p>	<p><b>This session will cover:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to respond to online incidents.</li> <li>• How to report content to the eSafety Commissioner.</li> <li>• How we can learn from online incidents.</li> </ul> <p><b>Instructions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divide participants into small groups and distribute the eight scenario cards.</li> <li>2. There are three questions to prompt participants when thinking about how to respond: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What would you do first if faced with the scenario?</li> <li>b. How would you help resolve the issue?</li> <li>c. What can we learn from this incident?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Participants discuss the scenarios and their suggested responses in groups. Direct participants to use eSafety's <a href="#">Respond – Guide to assessing online safety incidents</a> and remind them to also consider school and/or education sector policies and procedures, where applicable.</li> <li>4. Each group will present their findings. There may not be definitive answers to all scenarios. The goal is to identify what good practice might look like.</li> <li>5. Once groups have presented their responses, put together and share some summary tips and strategies.</li> <li>6. As a group, discuss the strengths of various responses and areas for improvement.</li> <li>7. Complete this process for each question. Each scenario should take 30 to 35 minutes to complete.</li> </ol> <p><b>Important note</b></p> <p>Some of the scenarios may raise issues that should be discussed further with school leadership, advisors or legal teams, as applicable.</p>	<p>5 min</p>

<p><b>5. Question 1 What would you do first if faced with this scenario?</b></p>	<p>After distributing scenarios and allowing time for participants to read their scenario show this slide (Q1)</p> <p>Q1: What would you do first if faced with the scenario. Participants discuss this first question in their groups.</p> <p><b>Things to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the student at risk of harm and if so, who should be notified?</li> <li>• Which school and/or education sector policies and procedures are most relevant? Who in the school leadership team should be notified of this incident?</li> <li>• What is the story behind the incident?</li> <li>• Where has the content been posted or seen? How widely available is it?</li> <li>• What are the possible impacts of the material – in the short term? In the longer term?</li> <li>• Have the student’s vulnerabilities, needs, circumstances, rights and best interests been considered?</li> <li>• What can we learn from this incident?</li> </ul>	<p>10 min</p>
<p><b>6. Responses to Question 1</b></p>	<p>Ask the groups to present their responses (approximately 1-2 minutes for each scenario). At the completion of each group’s presentation use Slide 7 for the wider group.</p>	<p>10 min</p>
<p><b>7. Discussion about Question 1</b></p>	<p><b>Ask participants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who agrees/disagrees? Why?</li> <li>• Who would have done something different? Why?</li> <li>• How would this work in our school?</li> </ul> <p><b>Important note for participants</b></p> <p>The student/s affected may experience anxiety, anger and/or distress. It can be useful to involve a teacher or counsellor who the student feels comfortable with to make the disclosure process easier. Throughout the process remember to remain calm, reassuring and non-judgmental.</p>	<p>10 min</p>
<p><b>8. Question 2 How would you help resolve the issue?</b></p>	<p><b>Discuss the question in groups.</b></p> <p><b>Things to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the content be removed?</li> <li>• Is the student part of the solution?</li> <li>• What do our school and/or education sector policy say?</li> <li>• Do all students feel safe and supported?</li> </ul>	<p>10 min</p>
<p><b>9. Responses to Question 2</b></p>	<p>Ask the groups to present their responses (approximately 1-2 minutes for each scenario). At the completion of each group’s presentation use Slide 10 for the wider group.</p>	<p>10 min</p>

**10. Discussion  
about Question 2**

**Ask participants:**

- Who agrees/disagrees? Why?
- Who would have done something different and why?
- How would this work in our school?

**Things to consider:**

- eSafety has resources to help. Advice in the [Toolkit for Schools – Respond](#) element provides guidance and support.
- Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident.
- The wellbeing and protection of the students and/or staff involved including the target(s), instigator(s) and bystander(s)/upstander(s) should always be the primary concern.
- A note about social media age restrictions: No matter how old your students are or what platforms they have used, if they experience an online incident, they should feel free to ask you for help – even if they are under 16 and it has happened on an age-restricted social media platform or service. This would be in alignment with your school’s general duty of care. If an under-16 has an account on an age-restricted social media platform they are not breaking the law. It’s the platforms and services themselves that face penalties if they fail to take reasonable steps to stop under-16s creating or having accounts.
- Online safety incidents happen in and outside of school hours and grounds. The Australian Government’s Anti-Bullying Rapid Review has recognised the benefit of schools intervening early and appropriately to prevent the development and/or escalation of harmful behaviours.
- Action is necessary when schools become aware of an incident, even if the incident appears to be mild. If mild, the incident can provide an opportunity to build healthy relationships.
- Manage the response internally in line with relevant school and/or education sector policies and procedures for example, behaviour management, code of conduct, acceptable use, bullying prevention, child protection.
- Ensure all students feel safe and supported. Focus on restoring relationships with scaffolding provided by adults.
- Manage the response internally in line with relevant school and/or education sector policies and procedures for example, behaviour management, code of conduct, acceptable use, bullying prevention, child protection.
- Attempt to have content removed by reporting to the online service first. If they don’t respond, you can report it to eSafety. For [image-based abuse](#) material, including AI generated deepfakes, you can report it to eSafety straight away.
- Remember that there can be a fluid relationship between the targeted person and the instigator. Sometimes students move from being the target to the instigator or vice versa.
- Teach online safety education to equip students with knowledge, skills for respectful online behaviour.

10 min

**11. Who can report and what steps can they take**

**Who can report?**

- Students and their parents/carers can make a cyberbullying, image-based abuse or illegal or restricted content report to eSafety using the red [‘Report abuse’](#) link at the top of the eSafety homepage.
- Other people (such as school staff) can also make a report if the targeted student has given their consent. Note that if multiple students are targeted, a single report must be made for each student concerned.

**Steps to making a child cyberbullying report**

To make a report to the eSafety Commissioner to have cyberbullying content removed:

1. First, report the cyberbullying material to the specific service. See [The eSafety Guide](#) which provides detail about how to report to a range of services, apps, games, platforms, and websites.
2. Collect evidence — copy URLs or take screenshots of the material.
3. If the content is not removed, report it to [eSafety](#)
4. Block the person and talk to someone you trust.

**Steps to make an image-based abuse report**

To make a report to the eSafety Commissioner to remove image-based abuse content online:

1. Collect evidence — copy URLs or take screenshots of what has been happening, including threats of sharing. Do not take screenshots of nude or sexual images of anyone under 18.
  - Refer to [Respond – Guide to responding to image-based abuse, including sexual extortion](#) and [Respond – Guide to responding to image-based abuse involving AI deepfakes](#) for detailed advice.
2. Make an image-based abuse report to [eSafety](#).
3. If a student aged under 18 is being blackmailed, report to the [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation \(ACCCE\)](#).

**Steps to make an illegal and restricted online content report**

1. To make a report to the eSafety Commissioner to investigate removal of content that shows or encourages violent crimes, extreme violence, terrorist acts, and child sexual abuse material online. Collect evidence – copy URLs or take screenshots of account profiles or usernames or their information about where the material is located.
2. [Report to](#) the eSafety Commissioner immediately.

**Possible discussion questions**

Note – the following content does not have a corresponding slide but may supplement discussions on the scenarios for more advanced participant groups.

- How does the school’s duty of care apply in this situation? This may require expert advice and revisiting with specific professional learning at a later point if staff are unclear

5 min

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would the response differ if the student was using a platform that was included in the social media age restrictions?</li> <li>• In what ways would the response need to change if the student was experiencing adversity at home?</li> <li>• Would the school's response differ if the student was using a school-issued digital device? Why/why not?</li> <li>• What if the material was on a personal device? <a href="#">Youth Law Australia's</a> website provides guidance on relevant state and territory laws.</li> </ul>	
<b>12. Question 3</b> <b>What can we learn from this incident?</b>	<p><b>Discuss the question in groups</b></p> <p>Things to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could I/we change to prevent something like this from happening again?</li> <li>• What records need to be kept? Is our record keeping adequate?</li> <li>• Who could be involved in the debrief?</li> <li>• Has the behaviour stopped?</li> <li>• Did we provide enough support?</li> <li>• At what point/s could online safety education be part of the short and/or long-term response?</li> </ul>	10 min
<b>13. Responses to Question 3</b>	After the group discussion, ask groups to present their answers (approx. 1 to 2 minutes for each scenario). At the completion of each group's presentation use Slide 14 for the wider group.	10 min
<b>14. Discussion about Question 3</b>	<p>Ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who agrees/disagrees? Why?</li> <li>• What could be done differently and why?</li> <li>• How would this work in our school?</li> </ul>	5 min
<b>15. Wrap up</b>	<p>Ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have you learnt?</li> <li>• What aspects of our internal policies and/or procedures may need to change?</li> <li>• Do we need more professional learning in this area?</li> </ul> <p>(For eSafety's professional learning opportunities visit <a href="#">Professional learning for teachers   eSafety Commissioner</a>. Your school may also wish to engage with a <a href="#">Trusted eSafety Provider</a> who can deliver professional learning to build educator capability.)</p>	5 min
<b>16. Final slide</b>	In a final slide, include any school-specific information you would like to share with participants.	10 min
		<b>Total:</b> <b>130 min</b>

## Secondary scenarios

### Secondary scenario 1

Charlie makes hurtful remarks about Yoshi's ethnicity in an in-app gaming chat. Yoshi is confident and assertive and informs Charlie that the behaviour is disrespectful. Yoshi reports the incident to the class teacher. Charlie is currently struggling with being new to the school and having difficulties fitting in.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides for responding to online safety incidents](#)
- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours.](#)

### Secondary scenario 2

Sam shared a nude/sexual image exclusively with his girlfriend Jessie. After the relationship ended, Sam's nude/sexual image was shared in a group homework chat on a messaging app. One of Sam's friends disclosed this to the school counsellor.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides for responding to online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Guide to responding to image-based abuse including sexual extortion.](#)

### Secondary scenario 3

Ava approaches you five minutes after the bell on Friday to disclose to you that someone has uploaded a photo to a group chat. It appears to be her face on a nude body. It is very realistic. She is distraught and adamant that the images are not hers — they are fake. Ava's parents are very strict, and she is worried about their reaction.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Guide to responding to image-based abuse involving AI deepfakes](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting parents/carers after an online safety incident.](#)

### Secondary scenario 4

Jun who has been circumventing the social media age restrictions, discloses that he has seen videos on a popular social media platform of another student taking drugs and looking disoriented while in school uniform. The 14-year-old student had been participating in risky dares to be included in a group.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Guide to responding to critical online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident](#)

### Secondary scenario 5

Sloane, who is 14, has a cognitive impairment. Sloane thinks that 'everyone' shares nudes and shared a nude photo with a friend, unaware that this has risk and should be consensual. Sloane's mum finds out. She has a good relationship with Sloane's homeroom teacher and asks the teacher what to do.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Engage: Student voice survey \(Years 7 to 12\)](#)
- [Engage: Activities for students to take the lead in online safety \(Years 4 to 8\)](#) or [Engage: Activities for students to take the lead in online safety \(Years 7 to 12\)](#)
- [Respond: Tips for parents/carers after an online safety incident.](#)

### Secondary scenario 6

James has recorded and uploaded, to a Google classroom folder, a private conversation with friends where they ridiculed and made disparaging and defamatory remarks about a teacher. It has been shared widely, and the teacher is very upset.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides to online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Guide to responding to online abuse that targets staff](#)
- [Educate: Tips for supporting staff wellbeing online](#)

### Secondary scenario 7

You discover that one of your students has sent threatening and humiliating text messages and emails to Esther, another student. The most recent include inciting her to suicide. Esther's friend Henry tells you that Esther has become withdrawn, overwhelmed and terrified about when the next message will come, and powerless to stop it. Henry is afraid Esther will hurt herself.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides to online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Guide to responding to critical online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident](#)

### Secondary scenario 8

16-year-old Nazma is changing in the sports room. While she is not wearing her hijab, 15-year-old Amal takes a photo of her and posts it to Instagram. Nazma is furious and upset, as are her parents. Amal has also circumvented the social media age restrictions.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Guide to responding to image-based abuse including sexual extortion](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting parents/carers after an online safety incident](#)

# Primary scenarios

## Primary scenario 1

Luca was using his phone on the bus home from school and invited those around him to look at some violent videos that he could see straight from the YouTube homepage (logged out of an account). The parent of a distressed child has sent you an email letting you know about the incident.

### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#)
- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides to online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting parents/carers after an online safety incident](#)

## Primary scenario 2

On the way to the school bus, Jesse pushed Marko to the ground while threatening and verbally abusing him. A group of students were watching. One student recorded the incident on his phone and posted it to a group chat.

### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#)
- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides to online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident](#)

## Primary scenario 3

Ryder has repeatedly teased and harassed Hamid on an online gaming platform. Hamid's parents come to school, asking what to do.

### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#)
- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides to online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident](#)

## Primary scenario 4

You are informed that Seamus, a Year 5 student, has been producing and uploading 'how to play videos' on a video sharing platform not included in the social media age restrictions. In the videos, Seamus is in his school uniform and swearing, and information about where he lives is visible in the videos. Seamus has many followers online, some who appear to be unknown to him. A parent, who has seen the videos, has raised concerns about his privacy and inappropriate language.

### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides to online safety incidents](#)
- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#)

### Primary scenario 5

Jax mother posted a video of her dancing on a video sharing app after school hours. Some people who saw the video wrote comments that teased and shamed her. Jax was extremely upset. The incident led to fighting in her friendship group and people taking sides.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#)
- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Quick reference guides to online safety incidents](#)
- [Respond: Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident](#)

### Primary scenario 6

Students have discovered a new online team spelling challenge which allows them to invite people to join their team. The choice of members is random and depends on who is online at the time, anywhere around the world. Lou tells you that one of the players is asking unusual questions — directed at a few students from your school. She knows that some of her classmates have shared their personal details and have messaged, individually, with this person.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#)
- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Engage: Student voice survey Upper Primary \(Years 4 to 6\)](#)

### Primary scenario 7

Georgia has encouraged some members of a large friendship group to join a secret closed chat group. One of the members of this group is upset by the conversations that include ridiculing and disrespecting those not in the closed group. The student doesn't know what to do as they are nervous about the consequences if Georgia finds out they have told someone about it.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Prepare: Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#)
- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Engage: Activities for students to take the lead in online safety \(Years 4 to 8\)](#)

### Primary scenario 8

Your students are using the school's learning management system to collaborate on a piece of work. Over the course of a week, Jay makes mean and hurtful comments about Costa's work. You speak to the whole class about respectful collaboration and talk to Jay privately. After telling them how upset he feels, Costa's parents come in to make a complaint.

#### Relevant eSafety Toolkit resources:

- [Respond: Guide to assessing online safety incidents](#)
- [Prepare: Online Safety self-assessment tool](#)
- [Prepare: Guidelines for social media use, video sharing and online collaboration](#)