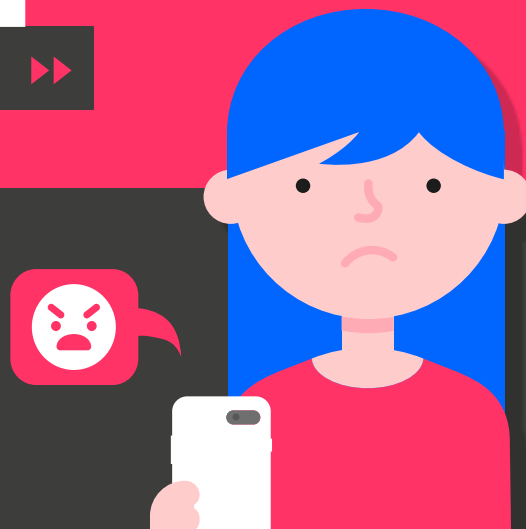


# Tackling online hate and trolling

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Advice to support children & young people ▶▶

As children spend more time interacting with each other online, it's important to help them recognise behaviours that can spread harmful content. The growth of hate speech and trolling online can often have real-world consequences so equipping them with the tools to address these issues is essential.



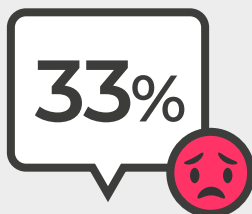
## What is online hate?

Online hate speech is any online communication or expression which **encourages or promotes hatred, discrimination or violence, against any person or group**, because of their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity. It can be referred to as cyberbullying or trolling and if serious enough may break the law and be seen as a hate crime.

## Facts and statistics



**One-third** of young people encountered hate speech online



A recent report from Ofcom showed **33% of parents and children were concerned** about being exposed to hate speech

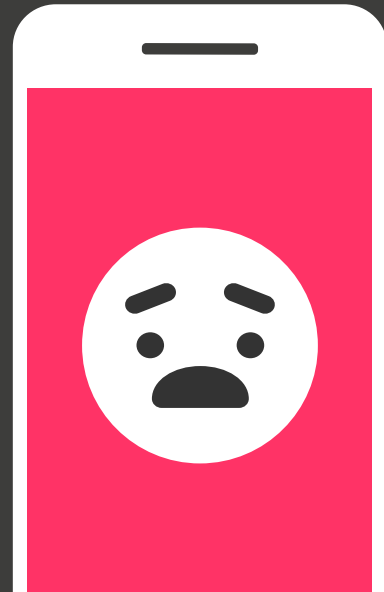


A European study in 2016 found that **a third of young people were worried** about being targeted by online hate material

## Why is hate speech so dangerous?

Being exposed to online hate can have a **real impact on young people's wellbeing**. It can also normalise discrimination, hateful attitudes and behaviours towards certain groups of people.

**Sometimes online hate can lead to hate crimes offline.** There have been incidents where young people who have been threatened online because of their sexual orientation, religion or race and have taken their own lives due to the constant nature of the abuse they received.

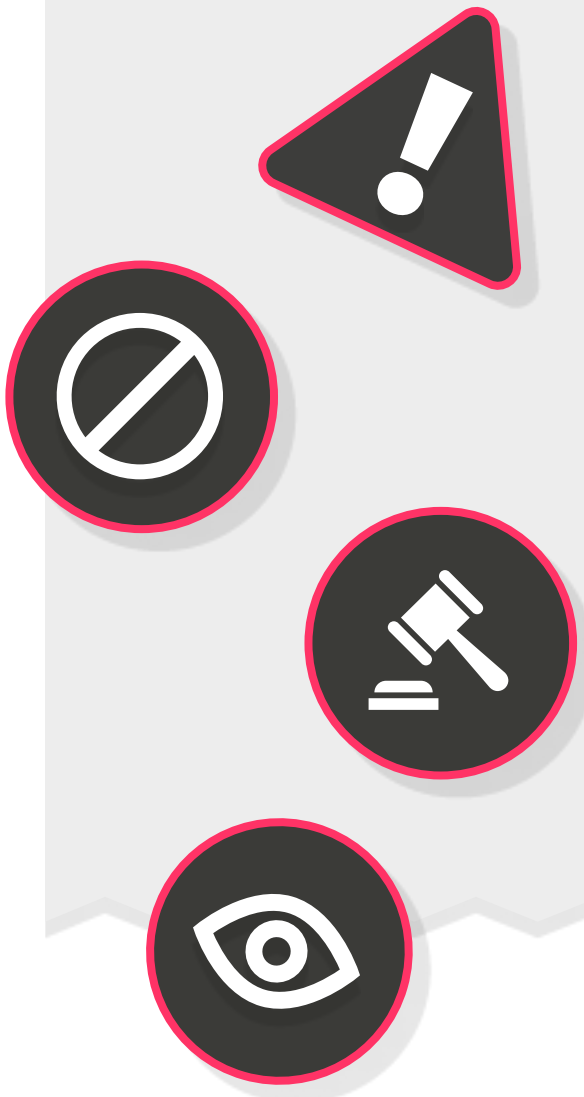


## What does the law say about online hate?

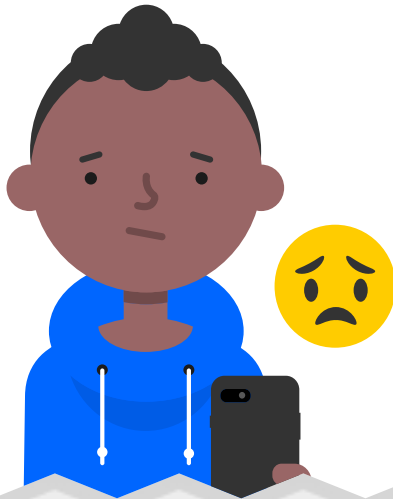
**Hate crime committed whether online or offline is illegal**, however, not all offensive content is illegal in the UK. If it incites hatred based on race, religion and sexual orientation then this can be considered as a crime. For content that does not meet the threshold of a hate crime, the police are required to record it as a hate incident. Laws in the UK aim to protect the freedom of speech so it can be a delicate balance to police online.

### How do platforms protect users from online hate?

The majority of platforms have community guidelines and specific policies on hate speech which outline what is and isn't allowed on the platform. If a user breaks these rules their account can be blocked or removed from the platform. Some platforms also use artificial intelligence as well as moderators to spot harmful content, so it's picked up early on. However, a lot of the policing of hate speech on social platforms **relies on users reporting it to the platform** so action can be taken.



## What's the impact of online hate and trolling on children and young people?



Children and young people are **especially vulnerable to online hate** as sometimes many are looking for groups or causes that will give them a sense of identity. Victims of online hate may show:

- low self-esteem
- sleeping disorders
- increased anxiety and feelings of fear and insecurity
- feeling lonely or isolated
- feeling embarrassed, therefore want to deal with the problem by themselves

Sometimes children may “feel left out, like they’ve got no friends”, or impact on their schooling and may lead to depression.

## How are people targeted by online hate speech?

- **Trolling** – social media posts that contain hate speech or images. Posts that are created can be reposted, shared, liked or retweeted therefore continuing the cycle of hate
- **Messaging** – messages containing hate speech/images can be directly or indirectly sent to the victims through messages via email, WhatsApp, forums, gaming sites., etc
- **Online harassment** - can include repeated attempts to send unwanted communications or contact in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear
- **Baiting** – this is used in bullying to intentionally make a person angry by saying or doing something that annoys them, for example insulting someone’s sexual preference or race
- **Virtual mobbing** – when a number of individuals use social media or messaging to make comments to or about another individual, usually because they are opposed to that person’s opinions. The volume of messages may amount to a campaign of harassment

### Other forms:

- Threats of violence
- Hoax calls and abusive phone messages

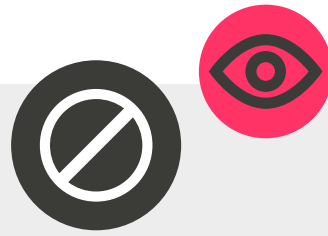


**REMEMBER!**  
Not all negative speech is hate speech. Someone, for example, may disagree with a religious scripture or policy without being hateful.

You can find out ways to recognise and respond to bullying here

[www.internetmatters.org/  
issues/cyberbullying/protect-  
your-child/](http://www.internetmatters.org/issues/cyberbullying/protect-your-child/)





## Tips to support your child

The best way to protect your child from online hate and trolling is to **take an active interest in how they socialise on and offline**. Having meaningful conversations with them to develop their critical thinking is essential. Here are some tips you can share with them to help them develop good online behaviours:

- **Tip 1** – **Make sure they know** to treat others as they want to be treated
- **Tip 2** – **Advise them** not to spread hateful or threatening content online but report it
- **Tip 3** – **Tell them** not to say something online that they wouldn't say face-to-face



- **Tip 4** – **Ensure they're aware of** the community guides on the platforms they use, such as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. Find out more here [www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/social-media-resources/](http://www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/social-media-resources/)
- **Tip 5** – **Ask them** if they know about online hate, would they recognise it?
- **Tip 6** – **Encourage your children** to have an open attitude and honest curiosity about other people because some instances of hate speech are based on ignorance or false information
- **Tip 7** – **Look for terms** that might creep into your child's vocabulary. Sometimes kids (and adults) use harmful terms without realising

### REPORT IT

- **Block** the perpetrator immediately
- **Report** it to the school
- **Report online hate material** to the website admin – most websites have rules known as 'acceptable use policies' and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. See our report issue page [www.internetmatters.org/report-issue/](http://www.internetmatters.org/report-issue/)
- **Report it to the hosting company** – If the website itself is hateful or supports violence then let the website's hosting company know. You can find out which company hosts a website by entering their web address on 'Who is hosting this?' [www.whoishostingthis.com/](http://www.whoishostingthis.com/)
- **Contact Stop Hate UK** [www.stophateuk.org/](http://www.stophateuk.org/)
- **Contact the police** [www.report-it.org.uk/your\\_police\\_force](http://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force)

Visit [internetmatters.org](http://internetmatters.org) for more advice

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