

Cybercrime

What is it?

Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It can be either:

- **Cyber-enabled:** where technology is used to scale up or speed up crimes that can also happen offline – such as buying drugs, sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation
- **Cyber-dependent:** crimes that can only be committed using a computer or the internet

Cyber-dependent crimes can include:

- **Hacking:** unauthorised access to computers or networks. For example, accessing a school's computer network without consent, to look for test papers or change grades
- **Denial of service (DoS) or distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, or booting:** making a computer, network or website unavailable by overwhelming it with lots of internet traffic. For example, 'booting' others offline to win an online game
- **Making, supplying or obtaining malware (malicious software):** this includes viruses or malware that access or control other people's devices or data, with the intention to commit further offence. For example, putting a virus on school computers so they don't work properly

Why is cybercrime a safeguarding issue?

Children with particular skills and interest in computing and technology might stray into cyber-dependent crime, either inadvertently or deliberately. They might commit cyber-dependent crimes without realising that what they're doing is illegal.

Cybercrime is a serious criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act. Remember – the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is 10, so children could be arrested and charged.

As part of our safeguarding responsibilities, we have a duty to protect children from harm related to cybercrime. If you feel confident, talk to your pupils about:

- How they can use their computing skills in positive ways
- The consequences of becoming involved in cybercrime

How can I tell if a child might be at risk of cybercrime?

Look out for behaviours like:

- Spending more time online
- Showing a particular interest in coding
- Showing a particular interest in computers and technology
- Being tired, due to irregular sleeping patterns
- Having more money (from online activities)
- Being resistant when asked what they do online

- Parents/carers mentioning them using a lot of data on their phone or home broadband
- Becoming more socially isolated

What should I do if I have concerns?

- Tell our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL, and make a written record of your concerns, too
- The DSL might refer the child to the National Crime Agency's (NCA) **Cyber Choices** programme, which aims to help young people at risk of being drawn into **cyber-dependent crime** make more informed choices and use their cyber skills in a legal way

Sources

This factsheet was produced by [The Key Safeguarding: thekeysupport.com/safeguarding](https://thekeysupport.com/safeguarding)

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