Child Protection Guidance

Safeguarding youth when using the KID_ACTIONS Educational materials

Cyberbullying is a topic that can produce a wide range of emotions when discussed with children and young people. It is also an area where sensitive discussions may take place and can result in disclosures by young people or discovery of incidents where a response is required to safeguard the young person(s) involved.

This guide provides some suggested steps to take when using the KID_ACTIONS educational toolkit and tools, in order to ensure that young people are protected and supported. Suggested activities are included to help you, as a professional working with young people, to consider how you handle disclosures and seek further help and support in managing cyberbullying incidents.

1.   SUGGESTED STEPS
1.1. Set clear ground rules

Before running any activities around sensitive topics such as cyberbullying, it is important to establish and agree a set of ground rules with the group of young people you will be working with. These ground rules should be clear and also visible during the entire session so that you and young people can refer to them at any time. You may wish to print out copies of the ground rules to display around the room.

Here are some suggested rules that can form the basis of a discussion with young people to establish and agree their ground rules:

Ground rules	Explanation
Respect	We respect each other's opinions even if we don't agree
Openness	This is a place where we can be open and honest with each other
Confidentiality	We will not discuss the things shared in this room outside of this lesson
Free to leave	If you feel uncomfortable you are free to leave this lesson (please do notify the teacher)
Sensitivity	We will be aware that other people may have different feelings to us
Privacy	You are free to pass on questions if you are uncomfortable answering them
Listening	If someone speaks, we agree to listen to them

1.2. Creating a safe space

Discussing cyberbullying with learners will often involve sensitive conversations where learners may experience a wide range of emotions. It is important to create a safe space where people can freely express their views and thoughts without negative consequence.

This guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre outlines key principles in establishing classrooms (and other learning spaces) as safe spaces to discuss sensitive issues. There are 8 principles:

1. Set clear ground rules
2. Take a non-judgmental approach
3. 'No real names' policy
4. Listen to others
5. No obligation to participate
6. Handling questions
7. Seating plans

8. Expectations around disclosures

Using the key principles above, carry out a short discussion with your learners to review some of the above principles to make your classroom/learning space a safe space to discuss cyberbullying. For example, you could work with learners to create an agreed set of ground rules or class agreement. This might include expectations around not sharing specific details of a cyberbullying experience, e.g. saying 'My friend…' rather than naming individuals.

If your class/group already has an agreed set of ground rules, take the opportunity to review them with your learners and discuss if any amendments are needed.

1.3. Using the educational tools safely

Several of the KID_ACTIONS educational tools may require installation or setting up before first use. Please consult these guides in order to understand how to prepare each tool for use in activities with young people.

For any tools that require installation, it is preferable to set these up on computers or devices that are owned by your school or organization. If it is necessary for any tools to be installed to young people's personal devices (such as a smartphone or tablet), then it is important to make the following clear to young people:

- Installation and use of the educational tools by young people should only take place within the cyberbullying session that is being run.
- Any installed apps (such as Rocket.chat) should be deleted/uninstalled from young people's devices at the end of each session. This is to ensure that these apps will not be used as a method of communication between young people outside of the session.
- You may wish to seek visual confirmation from young people that any tools have been uninstalled.
- For educational tools that run in a web browser, ask young people to close the browser window at the end of the session.

The following applies to all uses of the educational tools:

- Some educational tools explore what it may be like to witness or commit cyberbullying behaviour. Use of terminology or language that might be considered offensive, upsetting or harmful should only be used within the session, as part of a planned activity.
- It is not acceptable for anyone to use the educational tools as a method to genuinely bully another person. Use of the tools to 'role-play' cyberbullying (outside of any planned activity/session) is not an acceptable excuse.
- Some educational tools encourage 'role-play' or the use of scenarios to explore the nature and impact of cyberbullying. For these activities, a 'safe-word' should be agreed as a group. This safe word will be an unusual word, so that it can be recognised immediately (for example, 'giraffe'). If anyone taking part in role-play feels uncomfortable and wants the role-play to end, they should say the 'safe' word. All participants must agree to stop immediately when someone uses this 'safe' word.
- The group should then support each other to understand what happened and how to move on safely together as a group.

1.4. Ending the session safely and debriefing

It is important to end the lesson together with all the young people. The topics discussed can be difficult, uncomfortable or upsetting to some young people, particularly those who have first-hand experience of bullying. Some children might disclose bullying or cyberbullying issues; they can be victims themselves or know that other children are.

It is important to know what to do if a child or young person makes a disclosure and that you are able to find the suitable help for this young person. You should always follow any child protection procedures that are present in your school/organisation for recording a disclosure and for who is responsible for managing this disclosure. Make sure young people know that you are available for further contact on this topic and that they know how they can contact you to discuss any concerns further after the session.

Take time at the end of each session to summarize what has been explored/discussed and ask the young people if they can tell you what they learned in the session. Some time has been set aside in each educational activity to do this, but you should consider the needs of the young people you work with. If you feel that extra time is required to debrief them and discuss their experiences, then it is important to factor that into your session planning.

Do not leave the room before all young people have left the room; some young people might want to disclose something to you or ask questions in private.

1.5. Handling disclosures

It is crucial to take a calm, measured and informed approach to handling any disclosures made by young people about bullying or other issues that may affect their safety/wellbeing or the safety of others.

In the first instance, you should always follow the agreed protocols and procedures in your school/organization.

However, the following points are important to follow in general:

- **Listen to the full story** the young person is sharing.
- **Try to avoid leading questions** - allow the young person to speak freely and ask open-ended questions to help confirm the details.
- **Thank the young person for opening up** and **reassure them** that you are there to support them.
- **Take care not to be judgmental** - this might prevent a young person from discussing the matter further if they feel they are being blamed.
- **Do not make rash decisions** (informing other parties such as parents) without discussing this with the young person first. There may be circumstances where informing others. immediately can have further repercussions for a young person.
- Make sure you **discuss the possible next steps** to be taken with the young person.
- **Do not promise to keep any details 'secret'** - explain that you have to pass their details onto others who can help.
- Find the right support for the young person – the young person's **safety is always the first priority.**

2.   ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

The following activities may prove useful in helping you develop or understand the ways in which you can respond to and support any child protection issues that may affect the young people you work with:

2.1. A step-by-step response

Having a clear and established process for dealing with cyberbullying incidents is crucial to supporting and protecting your learners.

Before running any sessions around cyberbullying, it can be helpful to investigate what procedures are already in place in your school for managing a cyberbullying incident once it has been identified or disclosed.

It can also be useful to develop your own response strategy on how to support learners who reveal a cyberbullying issue to you. Sharing this response process with your learners can also help them understand what you/your school can do to help and support them with cyberbullying, and may also give them more confidence in turning to you or your colleagues for help.

A template decision tree is included on the following page with suggested steps and questions to consider.

This advice from the Anti-Bullying Alliance provides further information and resources on responding to cyberbullying incidents.

2.2. Checklist

The following checklist may prove useful to help ensure you are prepared for using the KID_ACTIONS educational tools and toolkit in a safe and positive way, and are confident in knowing how to deal with any issues or disclosures that may arise. You may wish to adapt this checklist to meet any specific requirements in your school or organisation:

☐   Review the planned activities/sessions before delivery

☐ Explore the educational tools before set-up or use with young people.

☐ Be familiar with the school's/organisation's policies related to cyberbullying and child protection.

☐ Check available source of help/support in your country/region.

☐ Before starting any session, discuss and agree the ground rules.

☐ Display the ground rules in a visible way in the classroom.

☐ Remind young people of the procedures for closing/uninstalling tools at the end of each session.

☐ Remind young people you are available to talk further if they have questions or need help.

☐ Always be the last one to leave the room.

2.3. Seeking further help and support

It is also important to investigate which local, national or international organisations and agencies (including law enforcement) might be able to provide support for dealing with cyberbullying incidents or removing cyberbullying content from the internet and social media.

Use the space below to record the contact details of organisations in your country that can provide additional support:

The European network of Safer Internet Centres include helplines that provide information, advice and assistance to children, young people and parents on how to deal with harmful content, contact and conduct (including cyberbullying). More information can be found at https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/practice/helplines.

This template flowchart can be used to consider the steps you would take after a cyberbullying incident has been disclosed:

Cyberbullying incident disclosed or discovered

RECORDING

> How will you record/log this incident?

INVESTIGATING

> Who will you talk to about this? *(Target, other learners, bully, colleagues)*
>
> *How will you ensure/improve the safety of the young people involved?*

Is there evidence to support?

YES

NO

> **What are your next steps?**
>
> - Who do you speak to?
> - Where can you get further help?
> - What sanctions are to be used?
> - What can be done to support learners?
> - Can online content be removed? How?

> **What are your next steps?**
>
> - How do you explain this to learners involved?
> - What are the expectations moving forward?

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

> How could the incident be resolved?
>
> How will the situation be monitored to ensure it remains resolved?