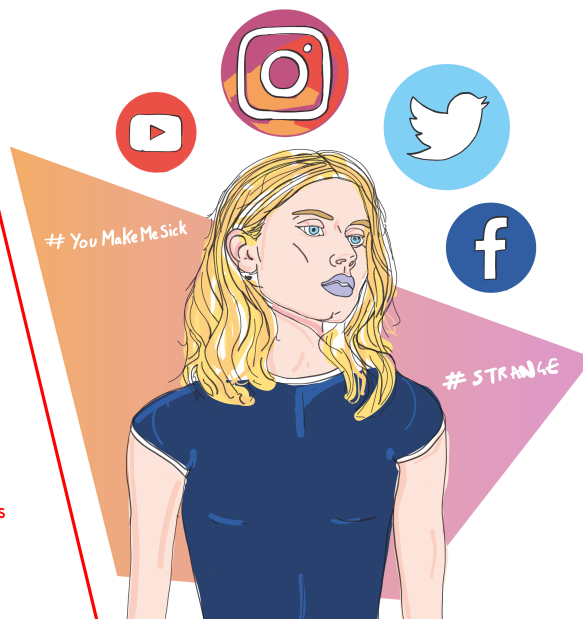# Online Hate Speech
A Guide for Young People

What is online hate speech?

If you use social media, like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, you are probably posting messages online about how you are feeling and what you are doing. Other people do the same all over the world, posting messages about what they are up to, comments on TV shows or news stories, and sharing photos and videos of friends and family.

There are also people who post messages that may be nasty and insensitive. Some of these nasty comments might attract the attention of the police, because they have broken the law.

They might break the law because the social media user says rude things about someone's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity (these are called a person's identity). These messages are known as online hate speech, and if they are very serious, the person that sends them might be arrested and sent to jail.

Are nasty hateful social media posts against the law?

If a nasty or insensitive social media post is directed at a person because of their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity the police may get involved.

They are more likely to get involved if the social media user is really nasty (what the police call grossly offensive). This can involve using very bad language and saying things that are meant to really hurt peoples' feelings.

The police will also get involved if a social media user makes threats (like threatening to really hurt someone), or keeps sending lots of nasty messages over a long period of time.

It can be tricky to know if someone has broken the law by sending a nasty post.

If you see a nasty post on social media always tell a parent, other family member or a teacher who can then decide what to do.

Do nasty hateful social media posts hurt?

When someone is picked on because of their personal identity their feelings can be hurt.

University scientists have found that when nasty things are said about someone's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity it can make them scared, really sad, cry and change the way they behave (like dressing or acting differently).

Saying nasty things about someone's personal identity can sometimes hurt more than being beaten up.

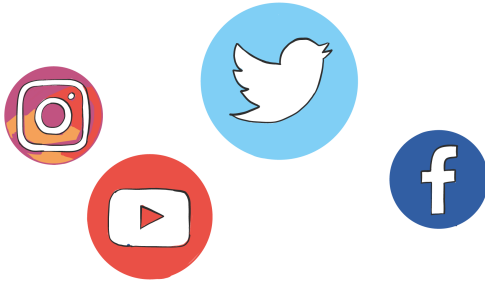## What should I do if I see a nasty hateful social media post?

Because nasty messages about someone's personal identity can really hurt their feelings, you should tell a parent, other family member or a teacher if you think you have seen any.

You shouldn't reply to the person sending the nasty posts with another nasty post. This can make things worse, and sometimes make the nasty poster turn on you.

Your parent, family member or teacher may decide to respond on your behalf or call the police if the poster is really nasty (what the police call grossly offensive), makes threats or keeps sending nasty messages over a long period of time.

If you tell a parent, family member or teacher about a nasty social media post you should also tell them to read this guide and the guide for the general public here.

What's happened in the past to people posting nasty hateful social media messages?

Liam Stacey

Liam Stacey posted some hateful racist comments on social media about a footballer who had a heart attack on the pitch. Some social media users sent him messages to try and make him stop, but he got more nasty and sent more hateful messages. The police were called and Liam was arrested and sent to jail for 56 days.

Isabella Sorley and John Nimo

Isabella Sorley and John Nimo sent threatening Twitter messages to Caroline Criado-Perez, saying they wanted to really hurt her. Caroline was so upset by the messages she received she had a panic button fitted in her home. Isabella and John were both arrested by the police. Isabella was sent to jail for 12 weeks and John was send to jail for 8 weeks.

Daniel Thomas

Daniel Thomas was arrested by the police after he sent a nasty homophobic tweet about Olympic divers Tom Daley and Peter Waterfield. Daniel was not sent to jail because the message did not break the law. It did not break the law because it was not very nasty (grossly offensive), it didn't threaten Tom or Peter, and it was deleted by Daniel when he was told some people thought it was rude.

Some YouTube videos on using social media safely and responsibly:

Digital Wildfire Project #TakeCareofYourDigitalSelf video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nXaEctiVhs (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nXaEctiVhs)

The video is aimed at 9 to 13 year olds who are starting to use social media.

Digital Wildfire Project 'What makes a good digital citizen on social media?' video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kh1_7VVoq8g (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kh1_7VVoq8g)

The Digital Wildfire Project asked young people "What makes a good digital citizen on social media?" This video shows some of the responses.

Hate Crime – Are you thinking for yourself?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nexTF4_nr7c (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nexTF4_nr7c)

(http://www.cf.ac.uk)   (http://socialdatalab.net) (http://gov.wales/?lang=en)   (http://www.esrc.ac.uk)