

Online Safety Policy

This policy was updated: **September 2024**

This policy will be reviewed: **September 2026**

Statutory policy? **Yes**

Introduction

E-Safeguarding

Most learners have mobile telephones whilst an increasing number also have tablets and laptops. Learners bring them to lessons and they are used extensively for leisure purposes.

Learners who attend Nulogic courses must follow their learner induction process and contract.

As a major aspect of Nulogic's Training methods, toward the start of every session, learners are required to hand over their smart phones and/or other electrical gadgets they have possession of at the start of the class. Phones are then locked away for use by learners amid break times if their individual guide allows.

- 'Internet Abuse' relates to four main areas of abuse to children:
- Abusive images of children (although these are not confined to the Internet);
- A child or young person being groomed for the purpose of Sexual Abuse;
- Exposure to pornographic images and other offensive material via the Internet; and
- The use of the internet, and in particular social media sites, to engage children in extremist ideologies.

The term digital (data carrying signals carrying electronic or optical pulses) and interactive (a message relates to other previous message/s and the relationship between them) technology covers a range of electronic tools. These are constantly being upgraded and their use has become more widespread through the Internet being available using text, photos and video. The internet can be accessed on mobile phones, laptops, computers, tablets, webcams, cameras and games consoles.

Social networking sites are often used by perpetrators as an easy way to access children and young people for sexual abuse. In addition, radical and extremist groups may use social networking to attract children and young people into rigid and narrow ideologies that are intolerant of diversity: this is similar to the grooming process and exploits the same vulnerabilities. The groups concerned include those linked to extreme Islamist, or Far Right/Neo Nazi ideologies, Irish Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groups, extremist Animal Rights groups and others who justify political, religious, sexist or racist violence.

Internet abuse may also include cyber-bullying or online bullying. This is when a child is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child using the Internet and/or mobile devices. It is essentially behaviour between children, although it is possible for one victim to be bullied by many perpetrators. In any case of severe bullying it may be appropriate to consider the behaviour as child abuse by another young person.

Sexting describes the use of technology to generate images or videos made by children under the age of 18 of other children; images that are of a sexual nature and are indecent. The content can vary, from text messages to images of partial nudity to sexual images or video. These images are then shared between young people and/or adults and with people they may not even know. Young people are not always aware that their actions are illegal, and the increasing use of smart phones has made the practice much more common place.

Online Safety is the generic term that refers to raising awareness about how children, young people and adults can protect themselves when using digital technology and in the online environment and provides examples of interventions that can reduce the level of risk for children and young people.

There is some evidence from research that people found in possession of indecent images/pseudo images or films/videos of children may currently, or in the future become, involved directly in child abuse themselves.

In particular, the individual's access to children should be established during an assessment and investigation to consider the possibility that they may be actively involved in the abuse of children including those within the family, within employment contexts or in other settings such as voluntary work with children or other positions of trust.

Any indecent, obscene image involving a child has, by its very nature, involved a person, who in creating that image, has been party to abusing that child.

Similarly, children may be drawn to adopt a radical ideology through a failure to appreciate the bias in extremist material; in addition, by repeated viewing of extreme content they may come to view it as normal.

Indicators

Often issues involving child abuse come to light through an accidental discovery of images on a computer or other device and can seem to emerge 'out of the blue' from an otherwise trusted and non-suspicious individual. This in itself can make accepting the fact of the abuse difficult for those who know and may have trusted that individual. Partners, colleagues and friends often find it very difficult to believe and may require support.

The initial indicators of child abuse are likely to be changes in behaviour and mood of the child victim. Clearly such changes can also be attributed to many innocent events in a child's life and cannot be regarded as diagnostic. However, changes to a child's circle of friends or a noticeable change in attitude towards the use of computer or phone could have their origin in abusive behaviour. Similarly, a change in their friends or not wanting to be alone with a particular person may be a sign that something is upsetting them.

Children often show us rather than tell us that something is upsetting them. There may be many reasons for changes in their behaviour, but if we notice a combination of worrying signs it may be time to call for help or advice.

Where there is suspected or actual evidence of anyone accessing or creating indecent images of children, this must be referred to the Police and Children's Social Care in line with your Safeguarding Procedures.

Where there are concerns about a child being groomed, exposed to pornographic material or contacted by someone inappropriately, via the Internet or other ICT tools like a mobile phone, referrals should be made to the Police and to Children's Social Care in line with your Safeguarding Procedures.

The [Serious Crime Act \(2015\)](#) introduced an offence of 'sexual communication with a child'. This applies to an adult, who communicates with a child and where the communication is sexual or, if it is intended to elicit from the child a communication, which is sexual, and the adult reasonably believes the child to be under 16 years of age. The Act also amended the Sex Offences Act 2003 so it is now an offence for an adult to arrange to meet with someone under 16 having communicated with them on just one occasion, previously it was on at least two occasions.

Due to the nature of this type of abuse and the possibility of the destruction of evidence, the referrer should first discuss their concerns with the Police and Children's Social Care before raising the matter with the family. This will enable a joint decision to be made about informing the family and ensuring that the child's welfare is safeguarded.

All such reports should be taken seriously. Most referrals will warrant a Strategy Meeting to determine the course of further investigation, enquiry and assessment. Any intervention should be continually under review especially if further evidence comes to light.

Online Terrorist Material

Where there are concerns in relation to a child's exposure to extremist materials, the child's school may be able to provide advice and support: all schools are required to identify a Prevent Single Point of Contact (SPOC) who is the lead for safeguarding in relation to protecting individuals from radicalisation and involvement in terrorism.

Suspected online terrorist material can be reported through www.gov.uk/report-terrorism. Content of concern can also be reported directly to social media platforms – see <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/social-media-guides> for more information.