



When It's More Serious than Bullying

Sometimes behaviour can be perceived as bullying when incidents are in fact very serious and a **criminal offence** has taken place.

Hate Crime

What is it?

Hate crime is defined through the law as a crime motivated by malice or ill-will towards individuals because of their actual or perceived:

- Disability
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender identity

What can I do about it?

If this is happening to your child or a child you know, you or the child can report it online. You or your child can also contact Police Scotland by phone. Call 999 in an emergency or 101 at other times.

Follow here for more information on [reporting hate crime](#).

[Citizen's Advice](#) has further information about types of hate crime and discrimination you may find helpful. Children and young people can get advice and support from [Childline](#).

Sexual Assault/Gender Based Violence

What is it?

When someone is coerced or pressurised to do something sexual or is touched inappropriately.

This is not bullying; this is sexual assault or abuse and a form of gender-based violence.

There are laws to protect children and young people from this very serious type of behaviour.

What can I do about it?

[Police Scotland: How to report child sexual abuse?](#)

Child Sexual Exploitation

What is it?

CSE can happen in person or online. An abuser will gain a child's trust or control them through **violence** or **blackmail** before moving onto **sexually abusing** them. This can happen in a short period of time.

When a child is sexually exploited online, they might be persuaded or forced to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- film or stream sexual activities
- have sexual conversations.

Once an abuser has images, video or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.

What can I do about it?

Report child sexual exploitation:

- Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger or call 111 if you think a crime has been committed
- Call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or [online](#).

Select [here](#) for more information on child sexual exploitation.

Physical Assault

What is it?

An assault is an attack upon the person of another. It will normally take the form of a physical attack. The attack **does not need** to cause injury for it to be seen as an assault in law.

An assault can be carried out using hands and feet or weapons such as sticks, bricks or knives. It is also classed as an assault if someone spits on you or threatens to set their dog on you.

Aggravated assault makes the crime more serious. Assault can be aggravated in several ways, for example:

- by the use of a weapon
- if the victim was a child
- if the victim was assaulted in their own home

What can I do about it?

- Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger or call 111 if you think a crime has been committed
- Call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or [online](#).

Theft

What is it?

Theft is a criminal act where property belonging to another is taken wrongfully and without consent.

What can I do about it?

- Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger or call 111 if you think a crime has been committed
- Call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or [online](#).

Blackmail

What is it?

Blackmail is when someone threatens to do something to you or someone else if you don't do something in return. It's never okay and is against the law to blackmail somebody. Threatening to share sexual or nude images can be a form of blackmail.

What can I do about it?

- Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger or call 111 if you think a crime has been committed
- Call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or [online](#).

Sharing Indecent Images

What is it?

Childline explains it using this language:

“Having sexting photos or videos on your phone or computer. If you are under the age of 18, the law sees you as a child. Therefore, if you have any indecent images or videos of somebody who is under 18 you would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child – even if you are the same age.”

What can I do about it?

[Sexting: advice for professionals \(NSPCC\)](#)

Unsuccessful Attempts at Bullying

What is it?

A person can attempt to bully someone using a range of behaviours but it has no impact.

What can I do about it?

In this case, the person has not been bullied but the behaviour needs to be challenged appropriately and should not be ignored.

For example, the use of **homophobic** or **derogatory** language, which may have no impact on the person it is aimed at, must still be challenged as the language itself is unacceptable and could impact on other people.

Fallings out & Disagreements

What is it?

We know that children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they form and build relationships. This is a normal part of growing up and most children and young people have the ability to bounce back from this type of behaviour.

What can I do about it?

In this situation, discuss how they feel and help them to develop resilience and strategies to manage their relationships.