

# Cybercrime

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## What is it and why is it a safeguarding issue?

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

We need to protect children from harms related to **cyber-enabled crimes**, as part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

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.

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):** such as 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

Cybercrime is a serious criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act, and working to prevent children getting involved means they can avoid legal repercussions and have better outcomes. Remember – the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is 10, so children could be arrested and charged.

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## How can I tell if a child might be at risk of cyber-dependent crime?

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



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## 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 onto the National Crime Agency's (NCA) **Cyber Choices** programme, which was created to help young people at risk of being drawn into cyber-dependent crime make more informed choices and use their cyber skills and interests in a legal way

### Sources

This factsheet was produced by [Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key: thekeysupport.com/safeguarding](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)

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