Hate Speech

Overview

In this guide, you'll find a range of activities that can be used to engage and inform people on this topic through conversations and insights.

Each section can be used independently or alongside sections from other topic areas. For more tips on how to use the resources in a session see **'How to use Bee Smart online safety resources'.**

A short definition

Hate speech can be a hate crime, but not all hate speech is a hate crime. Hate speech is any communication that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Hate crimes are criminal offenses that are motivated by bias or prejudice against a person or group on the basis of these same attributes.

Fast Facts

1. Which of the following is NOT legally a type of hate crime?

- **a.** Demonstrating hostility based on sexual orientation
- **b.** Demonstrating hostility based on religion
- **c.** Demonstrating hostility based on place of birth ✔
- **d.** Demonstrating hostility based on disability
- **e.** Demonstrating hostility based on race

2. Is this true or false?

Racist hate crimes in the UK rose to over 100,000 in 2022. **[TRUE]**

3. What percentage of 16–24-year-olds in the UK have seen something hateful or inappropriate online in the last 12 months?

- **a.** 7%
- **b.** 15%
- **c.** 54% ✔
- **d.** 73%

Questions to ask

- Were you surprised by the findings/statistics?
- Have you come across any of these issues before?
- Do you know anyone who has had experience of these issues?

Take away

Summary actions to tackle the issue

Hate speech – What is it?

- The legal definition of hate speech varies from country to country. In some countries, hate speech is a criminal offense. In other countries, it is not a crime but may be regulated by civil law.
- The law in the UK recognises 5 types of hate crime on the basis of:
  - Race
  - Religion
  - Disability
  - Sexual orientation
  - Transgender identity
- Online hate speech can be harmful because it can:
  - Promote violence or hatred against a person or group
  - Create a climate of fear and intimidation
  - Lead to offline violence
  - Damage the reputation of a person or group
  - Make it difficult for people to participate in online spaces
- Hate speech can take many forms, including:
  - Verbal abuse, such as name-calling, threats, and insults
  - Written abuse, such as graffiti, emails, and social media posts
  - Physical abuse, such as assault and vandalism
  - Visual abuse, such as cartoons, posters, and videos

Here are some tips you can use to help tackle these issues.

Prevent

- Consider carefully who or what you follow online? Some people and organisations are known to use hate speech and to target specific groups. In many cases they will not be given a platform on mainstream sites but there are other online spaces where they are able to speak freely. Avoid these sites to prevent being exposed to hate speech.
- Always think carefully about what you post yourself, expressing anger or frustration online is never a good idea – if you are upset about something it can be better to wait before you post or better still, speak to someone rather than communicating online.

Protect

- If you see hate speech then resist the temptation to pass this onto to others, even if you are appalled by what you are seeing. Giving airtime to people who share this sort of content is exactly what they want – even if you are doing it to highlight how wrong it is.
- If you see what you believe to be hate speech propaganda, then you can look to verify whether the content is reliable or not. You could use a reverse image look-up (e.g. Google lens or Tineye) to see where the image originates from.

- Many platforms will provide tools to help you to control what you are seeing online. It is possible to tell some social media sites that you are not interested in particular types of content – you can also block or mute accounts/users, so you won't keep seeing their posts in your feed. This can help you to shape the algorithm and have more control over what you see.

Resolve

- It is important to speak up against hate speech when you see it. Call it out calmly and make clear that you disagree with what is being said. You should only do this if you feel safe and confident to do so. Ideally, we should feel able to be upstanders and speak out against this type of behaviour as opposed to being a bystander. However, it is also possible to be an active bystander and report it to someone else to intervene on your behalf.
- If possible, you could counter the hate speech with counter-speech. You can post positive content that will undermine the hate speech and promote tolerance, equality, and truth.
- Report any hate speech that you see online. Most platforms that allow others to post content will have policies and community standards that will prohibit hate speech. Reporting any such content should result in it being removed from the platform quickly. [See how here]

Explore

Signpost participants to these resources to learn more and get support.

- Hacking Hate - Resources for adults working with children and young people
- Stop Hate UK - support for those who have witnessed or been affected by hate crime
- Report harmful content
- Online hate – facts and advice
- #NoToHate
- Information from the CPS on hate crime
- Guidance on how to report
- Hope Not Hate

Interact

Quiz to learn and test understanding of the topic

1. What is the best way to deal with hate speech?
   - **a.** Report the content to the platform.
   - **b.** If possible, share some counter-speech.
   - **c.** Block whoever is sharing the hate speech.
   - **d.** All of the above. ✔

2. Which of the following is NOT an example of hate speech in legal terms?
   - **a.** Showing hostility towards someone in legal terms because of their accent. ✔
   - **b.** Showing hostility or prejudice towards someone because of their race.
   - **c.** Showing hostility or prejudice towards someone because of their religion.
   - **d.** Showing hostility or prejudice towards someone because of their sexual orientation.

3. What does it mean to have freedom of expression?
   - **a.** You can freely express yourself online with no consequences.
   - **b.** You cannot be prosecuted for criticising your government. ✔
   - **c.** You can share controversial opinions publicly on social media.

4. Why do people engage in online hate?
   - **a.** To express their own hatred and bigotry. ✔
   - **b.** To intimidate or threaten others. ✔
   - **c.** To spread disinformation and propaganda. ✔
   - **d.** To encourage others to be more inclusive.
   - **e.** All of the above.

5. What are some of the negative consequences of online hate?
   - **a.** It can make people feel unsafe and unwelcome online. ✔
   - **b.** It can lead to violence and discrimination. ✔
   - **c.** It empowers people to fight back.
   - **d.** It can damage a person's reputation. ✔
   - **e.** All of the above.

Play quiz using Kahoot learning platform

Kahoot!

Discussion scenarios

Use these scenarios to spark conversations around the topic and help participants consider different the consequences that can happen when taking different actions to respond to the scenario.

Scenario A

Immigration

Ahmed sees a post on Facebook complaining about the growing number of Polish people who are now living in his town. It suggests that they are taking jobs away from "local people" and that they are also responsible for a recent spate of burglaries that have taken place in the town. The post says that the local community should stand together to combat the invasion and is calling people to attend a march in the town next weekend. The post has been liked hundreds of times and some of the comments are particularly aggressive and violent and are using very derogatory language to describe people from Poland and also other minority groups within the area.

Actions to take

What should Ahmed do in response to the post?

1. Respond and call out what is being said. **(Positive)**
2. Share the post with friends, condemning it and suggesting that they try to disrupt the march. **(Negative)**
3. Report the post to Facebook and to the local police. **(Positive)**
4. Try to identify the users who have liked or re-shared the post in order to point out that they are wrong and that what they are saying is unacceptable. **(Negative)**

Potential consequences

1. The advice with regards to hate speech is that we should not remain silent wherever possible, even when it is others who are targeted. We should speak up calmly but firmly and call it out in order to make clear that we don't agree with what is being said. Where possible we should also try and refute information with facts and evidence with sources to back up what we are saying.

2. Whilst it is understandable for people to feel strongly about this sort of behaviour, attempting to disrupt the march could place you and friends in a dangerous situation, it is better to alert authorities to what is planned and let them take appropriate action.

3. Reporting/flagging the content is important – social media platforms have community guidelines/standards and hate speech is not allowed and will be removed.

4. There is little point in targeting individuals, it is more effective to respond calmly to the main post (see point 1).

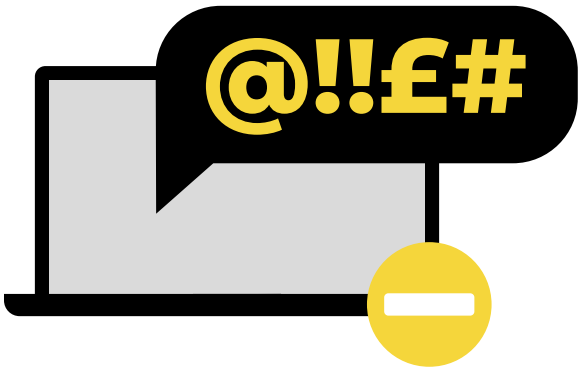
Other questions to ask and potential answers

What is hate speech?

- Hate speech is usually defined as *speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.*
- There is an argument that hate speech can be a pre-cursor to an outbreak of mass violence and there are some examples from history that would suggest that this is true. For example before the Rwanda genocide that took place in 1994, Tutsi people were referred to as cockroaches.

What is the best way to deal with hate speech?

- Blocking or trying to get content removed can be effective but can also be frustrating as platforms are not always going to remove material that we find offensive. Counterspeech is often seen as a good alternative or something that can be done alongside reporting. This means posting an alternative, polite and non-aggressive response to what has been posted. Using empathy, saying you feel sorry for the victims etc. is helpful.

Summary highlight

The Council of Europe states that hate speech *poses grave dangers for the cohesion of a democratic society, the protection of human rights and the rule of law. If left unaddressed it can lead to acts of violence and conflict on a wider scale.* It defines hate speech as an extreme form of intolerance which contributes to hate crime. Under-reporting of hate speech is a real problem with many victims fearing retaliation or believing that authorities will not take them seriously if they do seek help.