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Awareness of Unacceptable Online Behaviours in HE:

The Bedfordshire Cyber Awareness Programme

Background

A survey of 10,020 16-24 year olds in the UK [1] found:

- 69% had done something abusive to another person online

A survey of 13-25 year olds (of which more than half were university age) [2] found:

- 28% Had their personal information shared via social networking without their consent

- 62% had received nasty private messages via social media apps

- of which 42% were believed to be hate-related

[1] Ditch The Label (2017) *The Annual Bullying Survey* p. 23. Available online https://www.ditchthelabel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-Annual-Bullying-Survey-2017-1.pdf [Last accessed] 07.12.18

[2] Ditch the Label (2014) *The Wireless Report.* Available online: https://www.ditchthelabel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/wireless2014.pdf [Last accessed] 07.12.18

Background

A study of students at UoB [3] found:

- Only 51% aware of Acceptable Internet Usage Policy (AIUP)
- 67% had never received any guidance on how to acceptably use the internet

[3] Short, E., BARNES, A.B.J., Zhraa, M.C., PITCHFORD, A.M., CONRADIE, L., STEWART, G. and DOBOCAN, A., 2016. Cyberharassment and Cyberbullying; Individual and Institutional Perspectives. *ANNUAL REVIEW OF CYBERTHERAPY AND TELEMEDICINE 2016*, p.115.

Aims of Project

- To enable peer assisted learning (PAL) students to raise awareness and counter online harassment and hate on campus via an awareness course, Bedfordshire Cyber Awareness Program (BCAP).

- To enable peer to peer student support in responding to online harassment or hate reinforced by informed wellbeing student services and expertise from the National Centre for Cyberstalking Research (NCCR).

- To publish guidance on supporting universities to ensure, that policies, systems and processes are joined up and working on the ground to safeguard students.

Outline of our project

- BCAP for Students
  - Training Materials and VLE for Students in regards to Online Harassment and hate.

- Training Support Staff
  - Training Materials and VLE for Staff

- UUK Survey
  - Development of a survey for UK institutions, leading to sector guidance on Online Harassment and Hate in HE

Designing the BCAP

- Initial interviews w/ university student support staff and officers from the student's union.

Strengths of approach at UoB:

- Students referred to in-house services to help deal with negative effects (e.g. financial advice, counselling service, student engagement team)

- Beds SU carries advice sessions that students can use confidentially and separate from university.

- Students advised to contact the police where they felt the behaviours targeted toward them were severe or if they felt in danger. Students could also contact university police liaison officer.

- "Support and report" portal/email address provides information and signposting for support when experiencing bullying, harassment, hate incidents or sexual assault.

Designing the BCAP

Weaknesses of approach at UoB

1. No guidance around differentiation of acceptable and unacceptable digital behaviours.

2. No information about how to take self-protective measures.

3. No information on how to take appropriate bystander interventions.

4. Staff recalled dealing with incidents, but no official count was kept.

Reported back to UUK and 1-3 identified as themes for inclusion in BCAP.

BCAP Delivery

Definitions for 3 areas of unacceptable behaviour presented:

- Online/digital harassment
- Cyberstalking
- Online/digital hate incidents

- A series of scenarios used to act as basis for discussion on the acceptability or unacceptability.

- Encouraging application of the new knowledge, debate and reflection.

- Scenarios adapted from real examples, previously developed by NCCR in liaison with Beds Police and students.

- New scenarios developed to exemplify online hate incidents.

BCAP Delivery

- Negative impacts of unacceptable behaviours described and advice given for self-protective measures to:
  - Gain support (within university/SU and externally)
  - Block the behaviours or mitigate the effects
  - Gather evidence (e.g. for police or for reporting to social networks/web site owners)
  - Recognise common reactions that mean GP should be contacted urgently
- Potential ramifications for those conducting the behaviours are discussed, both from a university policy and legal perspective.
- Acceptable forms of bystander intervention that can assist without inflaming the situation or drawing the bystander into taking inappropriate actions discussed.

BCAP Delivery

- Few examples of some of the scenarios used in the BCAP training sessions:

Scenario E

Alice splits up with Dev.

Alice receives numerous emails from Dev stating he misses her and wants to get back together with her.

Alice tells Dev to leave her alone but Dev continues to send emails.

The emails are not threatening – they are purely Dev trying to rekindle the relationship with Alice.

This is **Unacceptable behaviour**

- This is **cyber harassment**
- He has tried to make contact on numerous occasions despite her telling him to stop. If it continued for a long period of time, it could also be classed as cyberstalking

Scenario F

Connor and Amina are in a relationship.

Amina tells Connor she is going out to the nightclub with friends. Amina returns home later the same evening and Connor tells her he knows she wasn't at the club as he'd been geo-tracking her all evening (using "Find my Friends", which Amina has activated).

Amina explains her and her friends changed their plans.

This is **acceptable behaviour**

To use 'Find my friends', Amina has to give consent for Connor to follow her location

Scenario F

Connor and Amina are in a relationship.

Amina tells Connor she is going out to the nightclub with friends. Amina returns home later the same evening and Connor tells her he knows she wasn't at the club as he'd been geo-tracking her all evening.

Amina explains her and her friends changed their plans.

What if Connor installed tracking software onto Amina's phone without her consent?

This is **Unacceptable behaviour**

- This is **cyberstalking.** Amina didn't give Connor permission to track her location. Connor is showing obsessive, monitoring behaviours. Although one evening. We can assume the software will remain until it is turned off or removed.

Feedback

- Fun session even though incorporates serious topics. Students liked the interactive element and most joined in. Felt more supported.

- Asked to change order of scenarios (easy to difficult)

- Psychology students felt not suitable for PAL (unexpected finding, different schools implement PAL differently. E.g. CST includes training/demos, others may only be "drop ins" for assignment support)

- Some students felt guidance was common sense. However agreed BCAP is useful to ensure everyone has common understanding (especially different ages and cultural backgrounds)

- Students surprised they have agreed to university policies (further confirming [3])

Results

60 people completed the questionnaire

- Own behaviour change: No statistical difference between pre and post session

- Helping friends: No statistical difference between pre and post session

- Helping Strangers: A significant increase in both willingness and readiness to help strangers if they experience online harassment

Integration with existing programmes

- BCAP was going to be firmly attached to our existing PAL provision, but changes of staffing and resource to PAL meant that we couldn't integrate our sessions with it

- Embedding new initiatives into existing programmes seems like a great way to organise things

- But your project may rely on aspects that are out of your control, leading to unforeseen risk

Student overload

- There are many demands on students time and attention, everyone wants to make them aware of numerous important topics.

- Induction seems like a good time when all the students will be together, but they have so many other things to do and learn about at that time.

- How do you get students to attend extra sessions that aren't directly tied to their course?

Diverse Student cohorts

- Some students will have covered online behaviour in School or college, but many others will not have

- Also different cultural backgrounds and technical knowledge mean different approaches and reactions to the materials

- Not all students have the same pathway through HE, need to ensure that Foundation Students, HD Apprentices etc… also get included

Sustainability

- The BCAP will be offered for all new PAL leaders

- It will also feature in the regular Plenary lecture schedule, to which all students are invited.

- Work is being done to integrate the materials in a foundation year unit surrounding the usage of IT

- Ongoing student projects to enhance VLE

- Future: Try to identify lessons that students would already be in where you can incorporate materials and/or scenarios (e.g. psychology, IT, business, etc)

Any Questions?

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