SOUK
SHOUT OUT UK

Blocking the Noise

A guide for candidates about digital safety

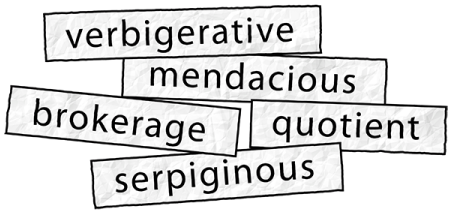
Easy read booklet

This is an Easy Read version of some information. It has words and pictures.

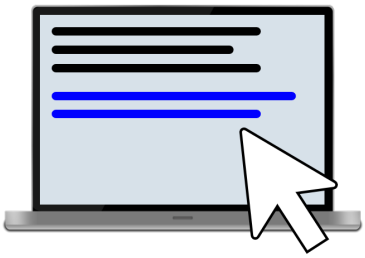
You might want help to read this booklet. You can ask someone to help you.

words

Some words are **black and bold**. This means we think they are difficult words.



Black and bold words are thicker and darker. We explain what they mean in a box like this.

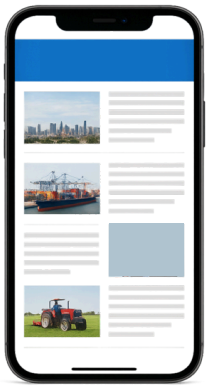


Some words are bright blue. These are links to websites or email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

Who we are

We are **Shout Out UK**.

We help people learn about **media** and **politics**.



Media means all the ways you get information, like from TV, radio, newspapers or online.

Politics means how decisions are made by people in power, like governments.

What this booklet tells you about

This booklet tells you about a guide we have made about **digital safety**.

Digital safety means

- keeping your personal information safe online
- protecting devices you use, like smartphones or computers
- looking after your wellbeing when you are online.

The guide is for **candidates** and the staff who support them.

Candidates are people who **stand** in **elections**.

Elections are when people vote for who they would like to make decisions about the area or the country they live in.

If you **stand** in an election, it means you put yourself forward as a candidate.

The guide is called **Blocking the Noise**.

A quick guide to digital safety

Keep your personal and public online activity separate

For this booklet,

- **personal** means connected to your own life
- **public** means connected to being a candidate.

Separate means apart from.

Make a buffer for your online activity

A **buffer** is like a cushion that is set up to protect something else.

Make sure you know what type of online activity is illegal

Illegal means against the law.

Make sure it is the real you online

People can do different things to put fake information online. This can mean information about you online is not true.

Stay standing

It is important for candidates and the staff who support them to be strong and stay standing.

We tell you more about each of these things later in this booklet.

More about Blocking the Noise

Lots of different people and organisations were involved when we made **Blocking the Noise**.

We worked with and listened to people from lots of different **communities** in Wales.

Communities are groups of people who have something the same about them, like the area they live in or their background.

We worked with and listened to candidates, the staff who support them and other people involved with elections.

We were helped by organisations called

- **Elect Her**
- **Disability Wales**
- **Race Equality First**
- **The Jo Cox Foundation**.

The money came from the **Welsh Government**.

Blocking the Noise is in 4 parts, called

1 **An introduction to digital safety**
2 **Online abuse and intimidation**
3 **Ways to manage online abuse and intimidation**
4 **More information**

We tell you about each part in the rest of this booklet.

Blocking the Noise

Part 1
An introduction to digital safety

More about digital safety

Digital safety includes protecting yourself from **online abuse** and **online intimidation**.

Online abuse is when things are done online that might upset you or have a bad effect on your life.

Online intimidation is when things are done online to **threaten** or **coerce** you.

If someone **threatens** you, it means they say they will do something to hurt you.

If someone **coerces** you, it means they say they will do something to hurt if you do not do what they say.

More about online abuse

Online abuse might include

- **harassment**
- **hate speech**
- people saying things about you online that are not true
- people saying or doing things online that upset you.

Harassment is when things are done to upset or scare you over and over again.

Hate speech is when people use abusive language to a person or a group of people because of something about them, like their religion or background.

Online abuse might include saying things that make a candidate's **campaign** look bad.

A **campaign** is everything a candidate does to try and make people vote for them.

More about online intimidation

Online intimidation might mean a candidate feels worried about their safety or the safety of their family or staff.

Why digital safety is important

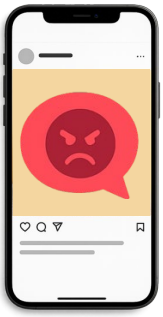
Information from an official meeting showed that

- most **MPs** have had online abuse or intimidation happen to them
- the thing most **MPs** are worried about when they do their job is online abuse.

MPs are people who speak for and make decisions about a local area or a country.

MP is short for **Member of Parliament**.

When a candidate stands in an election and wins, they become an MP.



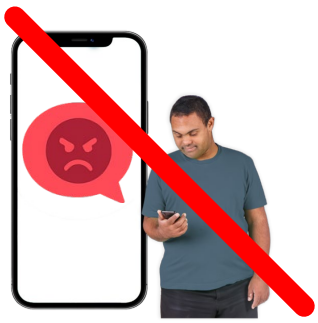
Information from an official report showed that

- a lot of abuse, harassment or intimidation to MPs happens online
- more threats of harm are made to MPs from **minority ethnic backgrounds** and disabled MPs
- more threats of **sexual harm** are made to MPs who are women and disabled MPs.

Your **ethnic background** is your culture and where your family comes from.

If you are from a **minority ethnic background**, it means you live in an area where most people are from a different ethnic background to you.

Sexual harm is when someone makes you do something sexual that you do not want to do.



Most of the threats made online do not actually happen.

But being threatened is scary and can make people feel like they cannot say or do certain things.

This means digital safety is important. It helps protect people and our **democracy**.

A **democracy** is when people have a say in how their country is run. They do this by voting in elections.

What you can do before you start your campaign

✔ Set up a new public profile as a candidate

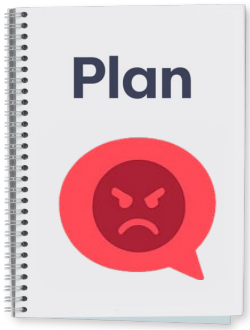
Profiles are the information we give about ourselves online.

Decide

- who has **access**
- who will check and post **content**
- who will reply to comments
- who will report abusive **content**.

Access means being able to use or look at something.

Content is any kind of information that is put online.



✔ Make a plan

Make a plan about how you will manage online abuse and intimidation.

Find out more in Part 3 of this booklet.

✔ Find out how social media platforms can help

Platforms are types of websites where people can chat and share information.

There are different things you can do on social media platforms to help manage online abuse and intimidation.

Find out more in Part 3 of this booklet.

✔ Find ways to make it clear what content is real

Include your official website and social media addresses on all campaign information.

This will help make it clear which accounts and profiles are for the real you.

If you can, use a **watermark** or logo on all your campaign information.

A **watermark** is a small image put onto something to show who owns it.

This will make it harder for people to post fake information about you.

Blocking the Noise

Part 2

Online abuse and intimidation

Information and **online abuse and intimidation**

When untrue or abusive information is put online, it can have a bad effect on the person, group of people, organisation or country the information is about.

Misinformation

Misinformation is untrue information that is shared by mistake.

Misinformation might happen when people share information and do not know the information is untrue.

When misinformation happens, it is an accident. It is not done to harm people or put lies online.

Disinformation

Disinformation is untrue information that is made and shared on purpose.

Disinformation is put online to trick people and make them think certain things are true.

Malinformation

Malinformation is information that is true or partly true and is put online to harm a person, group of people, organisation or country.

Malinformation might include putting private or stolen information online.

Technology and **disinformation**

There are lots of ways people can use **technology** to make disinformation.

Technology means new devices, systems and ways of working.

AI-generated videos or images

AI is a type of technology that copies how humans think, learn and work out problems. AI is short for **artificial intelligence**.

AI-generated videos or images can be about anything. They are fake but look real.

Deepfakes

Deepfakes are AI-generated videos or audio that copy how someone looks or sounds to show them doing or saying something they have not done.

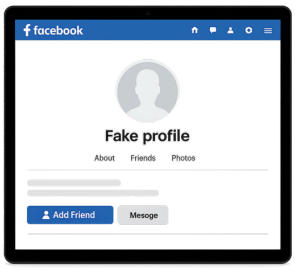
AI chatbots

AI chatbots are computer programmes that use AI to make it seem like you are chatting with a person online.

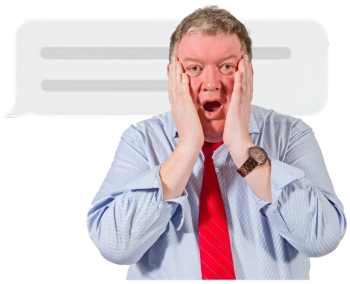
You can ask AI chatbots questions about anything and they will find an answer from the internet.

This means AI chatbots might spread misinformation.

Bot accounts

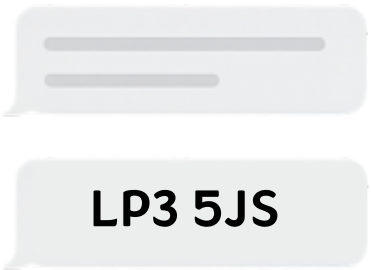


Bot accounts are fake social media accounts made and controlled by technology.



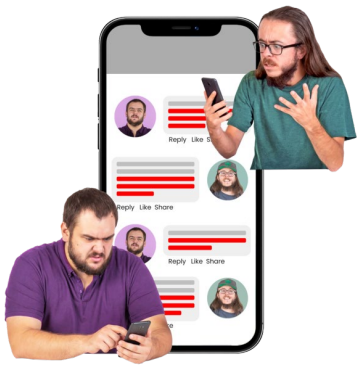
Bot accounts can be used in elections to spread misinformation or disinformation.

Doxing



Doxing is when personal information, like an address or phone number, is put online to make it easier for people to harass or threaten someone.

Trolling



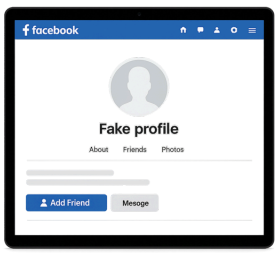
Trolling is when people keep posting nasty or fake information online to have a bad effect on someone or something and get in the way of useful content.

What type of online activity is illegal

It is important to know the difference between legal and illegal online activity.

Legal online activity includes

- people saying things that do not agree with your political message, including trolling
- people saying unkind things about you or your family and friends
- making AI-generated images that show misinformation or disinformation
- using bot accounts to spread certain political messages or disinformation.



We tell you about types of illegal online activity on the **next 6 pages**.

Threats

It is illegal to make threats to someone or their family or friends online.

Online hate crimes

Online hate crimes are when people do something illegal to a person or a group of people online because of something about them, like their religion or background.

It is illegal to **incite** hatred online.

Incite means do or say something that might make other people act in a violent or illegal way.

Harassment and stalking

Stalking is a type of harassment where one person will not leave another person alone. The person being stalked might feel very upset or scared. Stalking can happen online or in-person.

If someone does something to you that feels like harassment or stalking, and they do it more than once, it might be illegal.

Harassment might include

- sending abusive text messages or images
- posting abusive messages on social media
- making unwanted or abusive phonecalls.

Stalking might include

- following someone
- going into someone's home without **consent**
- watching or spying on someone
- posting online about someone without their **consent**
- **identity theft**.

Consent means you agree that something can happen.

Your **identity** is who you are.

Identity theft is when someone steals your identity online and uses it to sign up to services or buy things in your name.

Disinformation

It might be illegal to make disinformation if you know the content is false and you want to use it to incite serious harm.

Sexual content

It is illegal to

- share, or threaten to share, sexual images or videos of someone without their consent, including deepfakes
- make, or ask someone to make, fake sexual images or videos without their consent.

Child sexual content

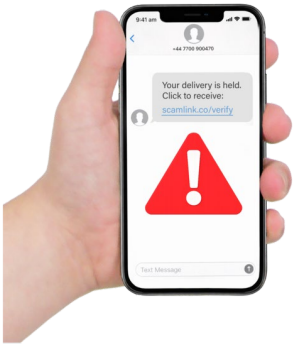
It is illegal to make, share or keep sexual images or videos of anyone who is less than 18 years old, including AI-generated content and deepfakes.

AI-generated content

It is illegal to use AI-generated content or deepfakes for

- disinformation
- hate crimes
- harassment and stalking
- sexual image abuse
- **terrorist activity**
- **fraud**
- **blackmail**.

Terrorist activity is when threats of serious violence or actual attacks are made against people, systems or governments to try and force a certain thing to happen or to make a political message clear.



Fraud is when someone tricks someone else to try and get something from them, like money.

Blackmail is when someone threatens to share secret or personal information about someone else to try and make them do something, like give them money.

If you think illegal online activity has happened to you, you can report it to the police.

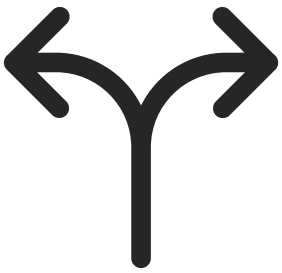
Find out more in Part 3 of this booklet.

Blocking the Noise

Part 3

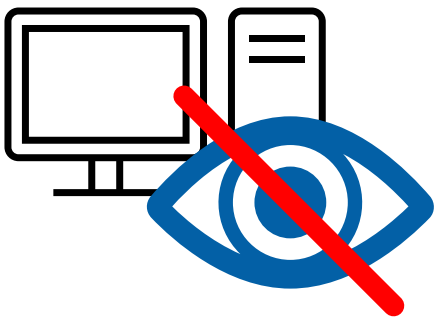
Ways to manage online abuse and intimidation

Ways to manage online trolling, abuse, intimidation and harassment



✔ Keep your personal and public online activity separate

Have separate personal and public accounts and profiles.



Make your personal accounts and profiles **private**.

Private means set up your accounts and profiles so only the people you choose can see them.

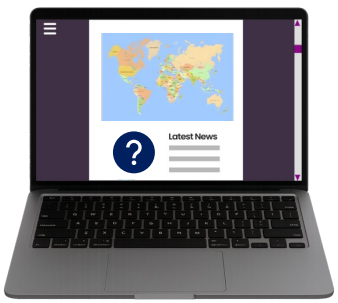
Do not follow your public accounts or profiles from your private accounts or profiles.

✔ Think about what you post online

Do not post personal information, like your address or phone number.

Do not do live posts that show where you are at that moment. Post photos and information from your campaign activities after they have happened.

Do not post information that tells other people who your family and friends are.



✔ Think about your content

Think about what is happening in the news and how it might affect what you post.

Some topics will mean you are more likely to get online abuse or intimidation.

✔ Look after your wellbeing

To help with your wellbeing, you can make a buffer for your online activity.

You can

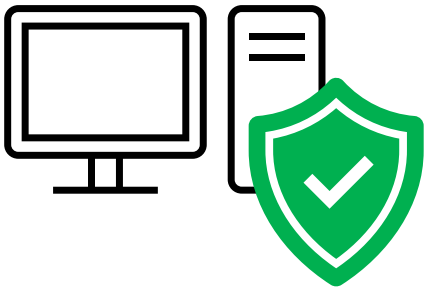
- turn off **notifications**
- decide on certain times of day when you do not go online
- use **filters** for comments so you choose what you see online
- use settings on social media platforms to help with what you see
- have someone else read messages and comments before you do so they can delete anything that is abusive
- use AI to help you read online content
- keep your passwords safe so only the right people have access to your accounts.

Notifications are short messages that tell you something has happened online, like if you get an email or someone leaves a comment.

Filters are a way to hide, block or sort comments online.

Ways to manage social media

Each social media platform has **safety features** you can use to help manage online abuse and intimidation.



Safety features are the different things you can do to protect your online accounts and profiles.

Some safety features are **proactive** and some are **reactive**.

Proactive means trying to stop problems before they happen.

Reactive means dealing with problems after they happen.

Proactive safety features include comment filters.

You can use comment filters to

- allow all, some or no comments
- block abusive comments
- block comments that include certain words.

Reactive safety features include being able to

- block accounts
- **report** accounts or content.

Report means officially tell someone what has happened.

When you should contact the police

It is likely you will see online activity that might be illegal, but not all of it will be dangerous.

This might make it hard to know when to contact the police.

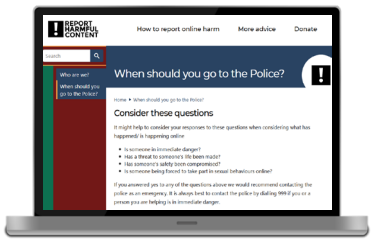
It is up to you to decide when a problem is serious enough to tell the police about it.

You should think about how the problem makes you feel.

You can use these questions to help you.

- Have you or your family or friends been threatened?
- If there is a threat, has it made you feel very upset or scared?
- If there is a threat, has it made you change how you work?

If your answer is ‘yes’ to any of these questions, the problem is serious.



Click this link to go to a website that can help you decide when you should contact the police.

What evidence is useful to the police

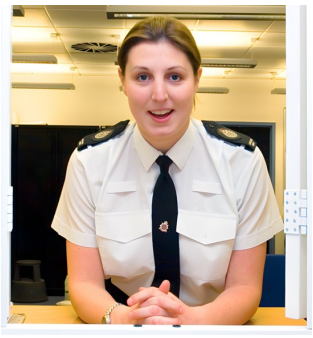
When you contact the police about any illegal activity, you should try to give as much **evidence** as you can.

Evidence is anything that can help show someone has done something illegal.

To have evidence of illegal online activity, you can

- take screenshots or screen-recordings of profiles, posts, comments, images or videos
- keep a record of dates and times things happened
- give as much information as you can to explain what happened.

How the police can support you



Everyone can contact the police for support when it is needed.

As a candidate, you have access to extra support.

Safety briefings

As a candidate, there are safety **briefings** you can go to.

Briefings are short meetings that give up-to-date information and happen often.

If you go to safety briefings, it will help you know about problems and who can support you if you are worried.

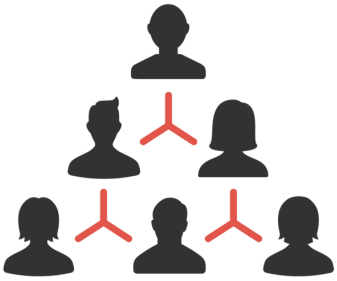
Operation Ford and **Operation Bridger**

Operation Ford and **Operation Bridger** are security services set up to support people with political jobs and their families and friends.

The services offer things like

- a person who works for the police who can be contacted about safety problems
- money for home security equipment
- a special team that finds out about and watches people who might harm people with political jobs
- a system that let's people call **101** or **999** and be looked after by the right people straight away.

What happens when you contact the police



When you contact the police about illegal online activity, it can help you, other people and the police.

The police might already know about the people or accounts doing the abuse.

The information they have might make you feel safer.

And the information you tell them might help the police support other people getting the same abuse.

Sometimes, you might be able to talk to the person doing the abuse. This might help fix the problem.

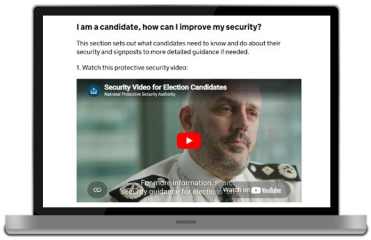
Sometimes you might want to go to **court** about the online abuse or intimidation.

A **court** is an official place where decisions are made about whether laws have been broken.

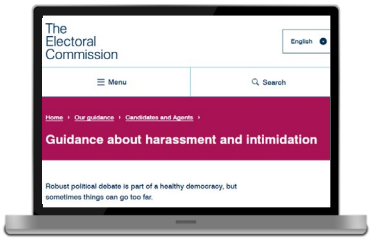
Blocking the Noise

Part 4
More information

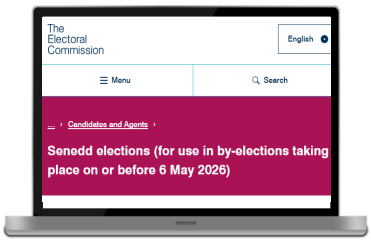
More information
About being a candidate



Click this link to read information called **UK Government Candidate Security Guidance**.

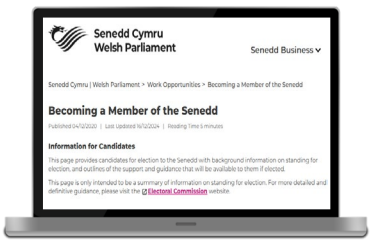


Click this link to read information called **Electoral Commission guidance**.

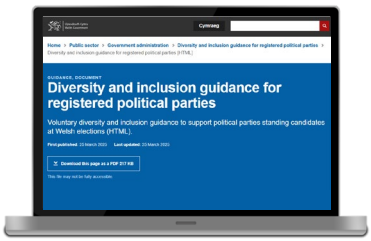


In Wales

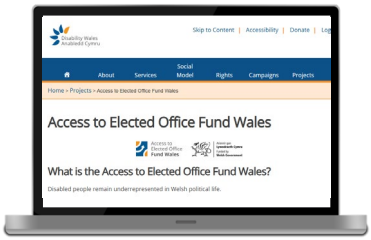
Click this link to read information called **Guidelines for Candidates and their Agents**.



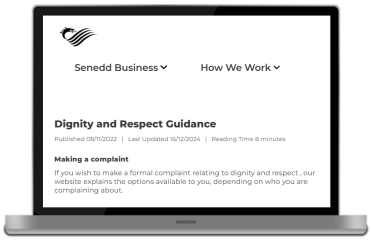
Click this link to read information called **Becoming a Member of the Senedd**.



Click this link to read information called **Diversity and Inclusion Guidance for Registered Political Parties**.

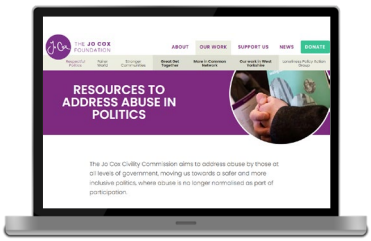


Click this link to read information called **Access to Elected Office Fund Wales**.



Click this link to read information called **Dignity and Respect Guidance**.

More information
About organisations that helped us

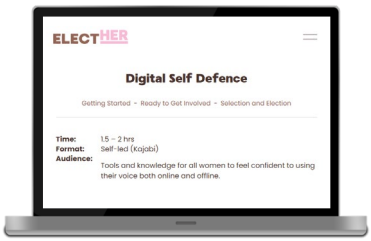


The Jo Cox Foundation

Click this link to read information called **Resources to address abuse in politics**.

Click this link to read information called **Joint Civility Pledge with Compassion in Politics**.

Click this link to read information called **Jo Cox Civility Commission Report and Recommendations**.



Elect Her

Click this link to read information called **Digital Self Defence, in partnership with Glitch**.

Disability Wales

Click this link to read information called **Candidate Toolkit**.

Race Equality First

Click this link to read information called **Representing Wales: Empowering Community Leaders**.

More information
If you need support

NHS 111 Wales

It you need mental health support,

- call **111** and select **option 2**.

This helpline is open all day, every day.

C.A.L.L. Mental Health Helpline

If you need emotional support,

- call **0800 132 737**
- text the word ‘help’ to **81066**
- or go to this website **callhelpline.org.uk**.

The helpline is open all day, every day.

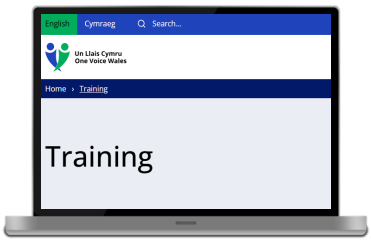
Samaritans Cymru

If you need to talk to someone

- call **116 123**.

This helpline is open all day, every day.

More information
Other useful links



One Voice Wales

Click this link to go to the **One Voice Wales** website.

Safer Politics

Click this link to read information called **Safer Politics Toolkits**.

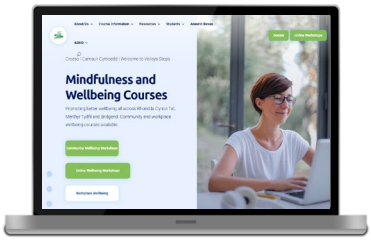
National Cyber Security Centre

Click this link to read information called **Staying Secure Online Guidance**.

Click this link to read information called **Defending Democracy Guidance**.

Local Government Association

Click this link to read information called **Digital citizenship: support and resources for councillors**.



Mindfulness courses

Click this link for information about mindfulness courses.