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# Countering cybercrime

# Against children

PC Francesca Wheatley  
Lancashire Constabulary

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# COUNTERING CYBERCRIME AGAINST CHILDREN

“The magnitude of the challenge around cybercrime against children first became apparent to me when a school in my area contacted me about an incident concerning primary school students aged 10–11. I realised that as a police service, we allocate much resource on investigating and responding to cybercrime, but we do not do enough in terms of prevention. In the face of increasing levels of cybercrime, the fastest-growing category of crime today, there is very limited prevention advice online, particularly for children.



I administered a survey through online social media platforms, asking participants how they use the Internet, what they do online and how they are protecting themselves.

From the results of the survey, I realised that the community was simply not protecting itself or its children against the dangers of cybercrime. It was clear that we needed to educate the community on preventing cybercrime, beginning with schools.

Alongside my colleague, we presented in front of pupils and ran workshops on the dangers of being online and whether they know who they are talking to on the Internet. I educated the children on sexting, cyberbullying and online gaming risks.



I was shocked at the number of pupils who approached me after these workshops to report the uncomfortable encounters they had had with strangers online, only now realising that these were wrong.

I have now been asked to run this workshop every academic year and have shared the presentation materials with other officers so that we can reach out to even more young people on how to protect themselves online. I would also like to extend this to parents, so we have arranged to deliver further workshops in local schools in order to educate parents on how they can protect themselves and their children online.” – **PC Francesca Wheatley, Lancashire Constabulary**