Online Harms and Mental Health

Session Plan

NHS
Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Session	Online Harms and Mental Health
Background Information	Online harms are harms that are encountered by people when they are online. The term 'online harm' includes all forms of harm like harassment, hate speech, cyberbullying, sexual exploitation and abuse. More and more people are going online, and this has corresponded with an increase in the number of people having negative online experiences. Research shows us that online harm can have lasting impacts on the 'victim' of the harm, including emotional and mental stress, financial losses, and in some cases, difficulties securing employment. Having conversations about online harm and the impact it can have can help encourage people to seek help if they are struggling.
Aim	To raise awareness of online harms and its impact on mental health and wellbeing.
Learning Outcomes	Participants will be able to 1. Dispel some of the misconceptions about online harms 2. Provide a definition of online harms 3. Describe types of online harms 4. Discuss the impact of online harm on mental health 5. Discuss the different ways to support the mental health of those who have experienced online harm
Duration	• 1.5 hours
Resources	• IT • Quiz • Presentation • Flipchart/pens • Session handout • Evaluation

Learning outcomes	Participant Activity	Resources	Time
1. Dispel some of the misconceptions about online harms	• Quiz	Quiz	10 min
2. Describe what online harms are	• Online harm definition	Flipchart Pens Slide	10 min
3. Describe types of online harm	• Types of harm	Flipchart Pens Slide	10 min
4. Discuss the impact of online harm on mental health	• Impact of online harm	Flipchart Pens Slide	20 min
5. Discuss the different ways to support victims of online harm	• Self-help and Services	Slide Handout	20 min
6. Looking after our own mental health	• Self-care	Slide	5 min
7. Reflection and session close	• Reflection	Evaluation	5 min

Online Harms and Mental Health
Facilitator notes

Slide	Notes	Time	Resources
1	Welcome participants and introduce yourself before offering an overview of the session. Have the title slide up and be visible whilst doing this. Emphasise that the session today is merely an introduction to online harms and mental health. This session is not intended to make people experts but to offer a basic awareness and understanding of online harm, the impact it can have on mental health, and what support can look like. Let participants know that today we'll be focusing on the harms that can be encountered online, but that	5 min	Slides

	we must be mindful of the benefits that being online bring too. These benefits include connecting with people across the world, accessing information, peer support, education and entertainment, and financial benefits, to name a few. Good or bad, the online world is here to stay, and so it's important that we all have an understanding and an awareness of how we can keep ourselves safe, so we can minimise the risks and maximise the benefits of the online world. **Keeping safe** Reinforce this is a basic awareness session and does not allow for detailed discussion. If you are concerned about a participant's mental health and wellbeing and feel they may be in distress, their Doctor should be their first point of contact. If you feel the person's life is in immediate danger please call 999 for assistance. **Online delivery** Please refer to the Healthy Minds Online Guidance if you are facilitating a session online.		
2	Put up the session overview slide and read out what will be covered today.		
Activity	**Online Harms Quiz** **Group or Individual Activity** Let's start with exploring some of the knowledge and attitudes that surround online harm. Distribute the quiz to participants. This can be done on an individual basis or as a group. Ask participants to complete the quiz by deciding whether the statements are true or false. This is a good starting point and gives an insight into the participants' knowledge and attitudes on the subject matter. Once completed, go through each of the questions of the quiz to generate discussion. Use the supporting statements to provide the correct answers and information. **Discussion point:** What did participants think? Were there any surprises? Inform participants that the quiz is a useful activity to start exploring what online harms are and how they can impact people.	10 min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Quiz
3	**What are online harms?**	10 min	Flipchart Pens

	Now we are going to explore our thoughts and feelings about online harm. This can be done as a whole group discussion or you can divide participants into groups. **Whole Group**: Ask participants to share a definition of online harms. What do they understand it to mean? Take feedback. **Group activity:** Divide the participants into groups and invite the groups to discuss the question. Each group should nominate a person to feedback on their discussion**.** Invite the groups to feedback on their discussions. Share the "What are online hams?" slide. Acknowledge any similarities that groups may have discussed and shared that resonate with the definition shown. Share that online harm is an umbrella term that is used to describe any type of harm that can be encountered online.	(5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	
4	**Types of online harm** We have covered what we mean by 'online harms', and we are now going to explore the different types of harm that can be experienced online. This can be done as a whole group discussion or you can divide participants into groups. **Whole Group**: Ask participants to think of the various types of harm that people can experience when they are online. Take feedback. **Group activity:** Divide the participants into groups and invite the groups to discuss the question. Each group should nominate a person to feedback on their discussion. Invite the groups to feedback on their discussions. Share the "Types of online harm" slide. Acknowledge any similarities that groups may have discussed and shared that resonate with the definition shown. Let participants know that this list isn't exhaustive, but that it highlights a handful of online harms. There are numerous types of harm that people can encounter when they are online, and this can change as the digital landscape changes.	10 min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Flipchart Pens

	Online harm can take place in a variety of contexts and isn't limited to just social media platforms (like Facebook or TikTok) or messaging apps (like WhatsApp). They can also happen on gaming platforms (e.g. Xbox, PlayStation), online forums, and dating apps. It's also important to remember that some forms of online harm are illegal, such as child sexual exploitation, and other types of harm are legal but still cause harm, such as cyberbullying.		
5 & 6	**Statistics** The purpose of the statistics section is to give an overview of the prevalence of online harm and the impact that it has on people. This is to highlight why it is important to raise awareness and develop our understanding. Inform the participants that we are going to look at some statistics to help give us a picture of the impact online harm can have. Read the information from the slides. **Discussion point**: once you have read out the information, ask the participants what their thoughts and views are on the statistics, are they surprised by them? **Summarise**: statistics provide a snapshot of the impact online harm can have on an individual. It highlights the importance of talking about it and how we can support people who have experienced it.	5 min	Slides
Activity & 7	**What are the impacts of online harm?** ==Group Activity== We are moving on to explore the impacts of online harm. Divide participants into groups, or assign them to breakout rooms if delivering online. Invite the groups to think about, discuss and write down how online harm can impact a person. When answering this question, invite participants to think about the various types of harm, from cyberbullying to the more severe forms like cyberstalking or revenge porn, and how these harms might impact someone. Once completed, take feedback from each group, asking for one/two examples from each.	20 min (10 min activity, 10 min feedback)	Flipchart Pens

	Bring up the slide to highlight some examples of the impacts, highlighting that this is not an exhaustive list. Conclude that this exercise demonstrates the breadth of the impact that online harm can have across the life course and in a variety of settings/situations. Often it can be a combination of impacts and not just one. Remind participants that everyone's experience is also individual to them.		
Activity & 8	**Supports** <mark>**Group Activity**</mark> This section of the session will explore what supports could be considered for those struggling with their mental health as a result of online harm. For the purpose of this activity, we have themed these into: • **Individual**: what we can do as individuals to support those struggling with their mental health as a result of online harm. • **Society**: what society as a whole can be doing to raise awareness of the impact online harm can have, and what support can look like. Put participants into groups or assign to breakout rooms and invite them to discuss the above. Once completed take feedback from each group, asking for one/two examples from each group. Once all groups have fed back, bring the slide up. Acknowledge any similarities the groups have come up with that resonate with the examples on the slide. Briefly go through each bullet point. **Individual** • **Talking:** reassure them you are there for them. Ask them what they want and need, don't assume. Encourage them to express their feelings and listen without judgment or blame. No matter the circumstances or the context, the responsibility for harm sits with the person who has carried it out. • **Digital literacy development:** Support an individual to reflect on their online lives – what's working for them and what isn't. They might want to consider developing their digital literacy, such as by controlling what	20 min (10 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Slide Flipchart Pens Online harm resources handout

	they see online, finding safer spaces online, or curating their social media feeds so they show more positive content. • **Peer support**: sharing your own experiences of being online and the harms you may have encountered can be a powerful intervention and source of support. It can make the person feel less isolated and alone. • **Supporting healthy digital habits: Reducing screen time:** Screen time can be valuable (such as connecting with friends), however, it is important to maintain a balance with other activities such as sleep, in-person social interaction, and physical activity. • **Report harmful content:** This can help empower victims of online harm and prevent the harmful behaviour from continuing - find out what reporting mechanisms are available. Several reporting tools have been listed in the supporting resources document as a starting point. • **Signposting:** find out what services and supports are available that might be helpful to the individual, such as counselling or legal support, depending on the nature of the online harm. **Society** • **Safer Internet Day, CyberScotland Week, Screen-Free Week:** Safer Internet Day (February) is a great way to promote safe and positive use of digital technology, particularly for children and young people, as well as inspiring conversations about using technology responsibly, respectfully, critically, and creatively. CyberScotland Week (February) looks to make Scotland more cyber aware and resilient. Screen-Free Week (May) encourages individuals to go screen-free for the week. Encourage your workplace/organisation/local community to get involved. • **Develop the digital skills of our workforces:** We need to ensure our workforces understand the digital landscape and keep their digital skills up-to-date, so they can maximise the benefits offered by the online world, and minimise the risks. • **Policies –** Policies are in place to make the online environment safer for users, such as the UK Government's Online Safety Bill which places a duty of care on social media companies to protect their users from harm, and the Scottish Government's Internet Safety for Children and Young People: National Action Plan. Schools should ensure		

	policies are in place on internet use, bullying (online and offline), and personal device use. Remind participants that they don't need to know a lot about the internet or particular social media platforms, they just need to have open and supportive conversations with people about how being online and any harm they may have encountered online makes them feel.		
9	Remind the participants of the importance of looking after their own mental health and provide a self-care activity.	5 min	Slide
Session Close	Thank the participants for their time and ask them to complete an evaluation.	5 min	Evaluation