Plusnet proudly presents

PLAYS ON THE INTERNET

Ghosts of the Internet

WRITTEN BY KONNIE HUQ
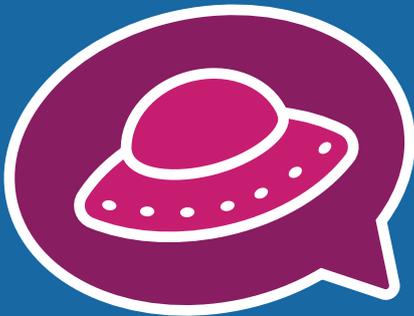
A trilogy of plays about online safety.
In partnership with Internet Matters

OVERVIEW

Plusnet Plays on the Internet is a trilogy of plays about online safety written by TV presenter and children's author Konnie Huq.

Growing up in a digital age brings so many opportunities for personal and collective growth but it also comes with areas to be cautious of.

Internet Matters offers families with the best advice and information available on tackling online safety issues. These plays have been created to use theatre as a fun way to engage parents and children in conversations about the internet in a way that isn't scary or daunting.

Chickenshed produced and staged Konnie's plays with the input and opinions of their young actors. This process means the plays have a voice that is both authentic and effective at communicating the messages behind the stories.

The three plays each address a theme of online safety tailored for specific age groups: online grooming, cyberbullying and online reputation.
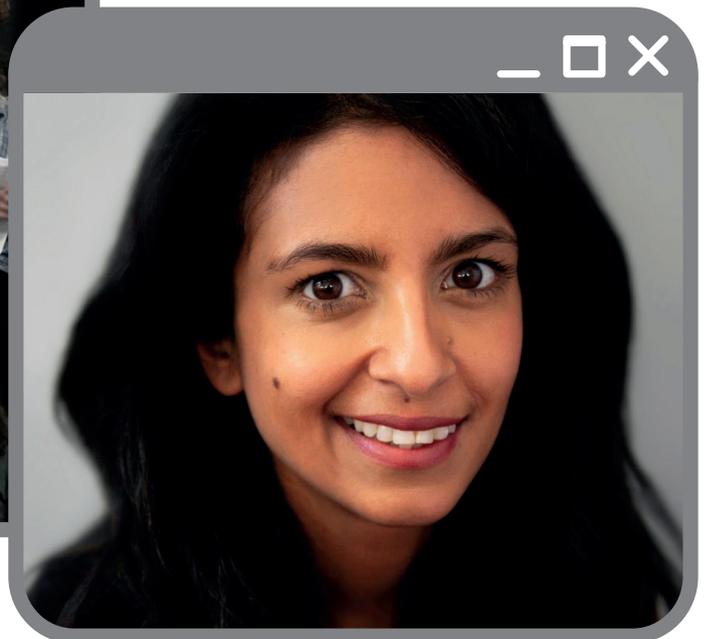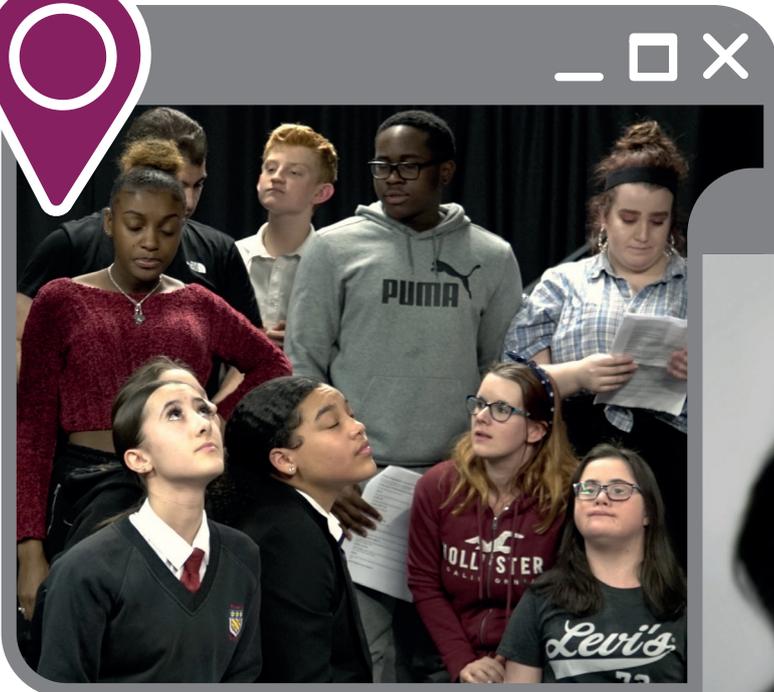
WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Overview

While the emotional aspects of bullying continue to be devastating, the internet and social media have changed the way children experience bullying. Cyberbullying, simply put is bullying that happens online through social, gaming or instant messaging platforms.

Tips

- **Talk about it and help them deal with it –** Find the right time to approach your child if you think they are being bullied. Be calm and considered and show your support

- **Don't stop them going online –** Taking away their devices or restricting use can make things worse and/or make your child feel more isolated

- **Don't retaliate – block the bullies –** Advise your child not to retaliate to abusive messages. If messages are repeated or continue, block and report them

- **Keep the evidence –** Take screenshots in case you need them later as proof of what happened:

- **Don't deal with it alone –** Talk to friends or your child's school for support

- **Know when to take it further –** In extreme cases, if you feel your child is in danger, consider contacting the police

- **Don't stop when the bullying stops –** Keep talking to your child and consider whether counselling could help them

For more information visit https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/cyberbullying/

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Overview

The following workshop tips include a range of activities, related to the 'Ghosts of the Internet' play centred around the theme of cyberbullying, suitable for children aged between 11 – 14.

Each activity has been devised to last roughly 10 minutes, giving children time to engage with the tasks and understand the meaning and importance of the theme, whilst remaining relevant and age-appropriate. The activities have mainly been designed for small groups but can equally be carried out by as many children as you have to hand!

The activities have all been devised to be carried out in any order as you'd like, and there is no need to do them all, this pack is a 'menu' for you to pick from, based on what you think your children will enjoy and engage with the most.

ACTIVITY 1. INTERNET TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE AGES

In groups, make three frozen 'pictures' or 'freeze frames' using physical theatre. The first picture should show the 'internet past', the second should show the 'internet present' and the third should show the 'internet future'.

Groups should find dramatic and interesting ways of turning one picture into the next. Discuss their ideas for all the pictures but particularly the 'internet future'. How safe are their visions of the future?

ACTIVITY 2. BULLYING PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

In groups, create three slow-motion scenes showing ideas of how bullying has changed from the past to the present to the future. What are the differences? What is the same?

ACTIVITY 3. QUICK ACTIVITIES

Young people get into a line-up. At one end is the person who spends most time online and the other end is the person who spends least time online. Discuss the term "online". What are all the things it means?

ACTIVITY 4. CYBERBULLYING TRAILER

Make a 60 second trailer, including in order of importance, the top five things to do if an individual feels they are being victimised by a cyberbully.

Present the trailers and discuss.

ACTIVITY 5. GHOSTS OF THE INTERNET

On paper, create a rough design for the 'Ghost of the Internet: Past, Present and Future'

Then make the figures themselves using physical theatre, to show how the ghosts appear and disappear and take Isla (the girl who bullies others in the play) to see her past, present and future.

ACTIVITY 6. GHOST SPEAK

In groups, choose one 'Ghost of the Internet: Past, Present and Future' and think of five questions that each ghost would ask to question someone who is cyberbullying.

Ask one young person, or the practitioner, to be "in role" as the bully. Attempt to answer the questions that have been devised to test the bully about their actions.

ACTIVITY 7. DO'S AND DON'TS OF INTERNET SAFETY

In groups, create a physical comic with speech bubbles showing three 'do's' and three 'don'ts' of being safe online from cyberbullying. Perform this like a speech at a protest march against cyberbullying.

Create three protest slogans which tell people not to cyberbully or how to stop it.

THE GHOSTS OF THE INTERNET

A play about Cyberbullying suitable for an audience aged 11 – 14

SYNOPSIS

In 2029, the use of technology is at an all-time high and social media usage is constant. But the most influential people on social media are not always those with the best intentions, and one pupil at the E-cademy risks using her power in the wrong way. But all is set to change following a visit from three ghosts...

CHARACTERS

Leads:
Isla – The Head Girl
Ensemble Cast:
- X 6 actors who play all other roles via costume changes
Including.
- Ghost of The Internet Past
- Ghost of The Internet Present
- Ghost of The Internet Future
- School Councilor
- Tom
- Characters in past scenes
- Characters in present scenes
- Characters in future scenes
- Narrator

SETTING

Near future city school – current day
Past scenes – 00's playground
Present scenes – the 'near future' city school
Future scenes – the 'near future' city school

NARRATOR

It's 2029, and welcome to the E-cademy, an innovative secondary school for children, from all over the world who are gifted with technological excellence.

CUT TO MUM AND SON

SON IS ENTERING HOME FROM SCHOOL

MUM

Adrian, did you get your 5 a day today?

FREEZE

NARRATOR

In this modern time, parents encourage their children to get screen time. Laptops, tablets and smartphones are all tools for helping their children get a foot up the ladder. The E-cademy curriculum suggests students get a minimum of 5 hours a day!

UN-FREEZE

SON

No mum, my battery died. So I only got 4!

MUM

Well Adrian, you'd better get up to your room and record a gaming video to share with your followers hadn't you!

ADRIAN

But, mum.....

MUM

If I don't see your eyes glued to that screen you'll be in big trouble

NARRATOR

But a problem has reared its head in this centre of this technologically advanced cyber-world. There are many different cliques and groups in the school and fitting in to one of these seems to be key to students' happiness.

There's the EMO-ticons, The Gamers, The Social Snappers... but none are more admired, none are more feared than the keyboards warriors of their time.... The Screen Queens!

WE SEE A GROUP OF SCREEN QUEENS ALL ON THEIR PHONES

NARRATOR

Everyone wanted to be a part of the Screen Queens – but the group used so many (rather silly) reasons to keep them out.

ENSEMBLE SCATTERED AROUND THE SPACE, SONG SCREAM QUEENS

Because you don't play sweet crush

You're not cool enough

You don't have a video channel

You haven't posted in the last 2 hours

You have an Android and we all have the best

Because you don't have enough followers

NARRATOR

In this technologically dependant school, the school's counselling service has gone into overdrive and what was once a happy, success story is turning into a polarised place with the popular elite at one end and the unpopular, unhappy people at the other end of the spectrum

The school is desperate for the positive things about the internet to be seen. But the way the Screen Queens dominate the school makes this very hard

This is Isla

WE SEE ISLA

Isla used to be the perfect Year 9 pupil. Well-liked with perfect grades and the holds the school's 4-year punctuality record. However all this popularity plus becoming a Screen Queen, is going to her head and this is to the detriment of those on the receiving end of her comments. Although she could never really build up the courage to say things to peoples face!

WE SEE SOME PUPILS FROM THE SCHOOL HOLDING UP SOCIAL MEDIA STATUS'

"AAGGHHH WHY IS MATHS SO HARD??"

ISLA

Maths isn't hard, you're just stupid

"WHOLE THREE HOURS IN THE LIBRARY AT SCHOOL TODAY! HOW BORING!!"

ISLA

If only you could read :(

"P.E PERIOD ONE – IS THIS A JOKE"

ISLA

You could do with a bit of exercise, might do you some good

CUT TO TOM AND HIS FRIEND

FRIEND

Why does she have to be so rude to everyone?

TOM

I remember when she used to be nice…

ISLA OVERHEARS

What was that?

ISLA'S FRIENDS LAUGH

FRIEND

We were just saying… how nice you are online!

ISLA

Nice? Nice? Nice is an understatement… I'm perfect!

NARRATOR

Later that day Tom returns home to a familiar greeting

AT HOME

MUM

Toooommm!! Did you get your 5 hours screen time today?

TOM

Yes mum, I always do!

MUM

Well why don't you post a status or two on your phone, the more screen time the better!

TOM TYPING INTO HIS PHONE

Had a great day at school today! Really enjoyed science glad Mrs Goodwill is back. #bringbackMrsGoodwill

HERE WE SEE PEOPLE COMMENTING ON HIS STATUS AROUND THE SPACE

REPLY ONE

Yeah, it's so boring reading from a textbook

REPLY TWO

I love Mrs Goodwill. She's the best

ISLA

What a loser! This is why you have no friends! Supply teachers are the best, it means you can do whatever you want! #rebel #tomisaloser #nobodylikesyou

NARRATOR

As this was posted by Isla, soon everyone in the school caught on.

EVERYBODY STARTS SHOUTING NASTY COMMENTS AT TOM

Before he knew it, it felt like the whole school had turned against him!!

EVERYBODY'S NASTY COMMENTS GETTING LOUDER AND OVERLAPPING

HEADTEACHER

Isla Mackenzie ..... you have an appointment with the school councillor Room 34A NOW!

COUNSELLOR

Isla, dear, I've been told you're not being very nice to people on social media?

ISLA

I mean, it's only a comment, I don't really see the harm. Anyway Miss, it's online no one reads it!

COUNSELLOR

You know Isla, sometimes these kinds of comments can leave people really hurt

ISLA

I have thousands of likes so it can't be that bad – more than all the kids and teachers in this school

COUNSELLOR

One day you will learn to use your social media skills more positively to have a better impact on the people that follow you

ISLA

Whatever Miss!!

SHE LEAVES

NARRATOR

That night....

ISLA'S MUM

Night Isla!

ISLA

Night mum

ISLA IS RESTLESS AND TRYING TO SLEEP

ENSEMBLE GROUP REVEAL THE GHOST OF INTERNET PAST

PAST

I am the Ghost of Internet Past. This behaviour cannot last

Come with me and you will see what the internet used to be like...

WE CUT TO SCENE OF MUM AND CHILD WITH GHOST AND ISLA STANDING SIDE STAGE

MUM

Sarah, you're gonna have to disconnect from there for a while, I need to phone your nan!

CHILD

But Muuuummmm....

ISLA

What? Why?

PAST

When the internet first started there was a thing called Dial-Up. This would have driven you ..... crazy?

PAST

Dial-Up meant you couldn't use your phone and internet at the same time, so your parents couldn't make phone calls when you were online!

ISLA

OMG that would be so annoying!

PAST

Come with me and I will show you, a tale of .... something... about... (gives up on rhyme) Oh whatever, just follow me

SMALL CHILD BEING CALLED NAMES IN THE PLAYGROUND BY A BIGGER GROUP OF CHILDREN, ENDED BY THE CHILD CALLING FOR A TEACHER

ENSEMBLE CAST IN A PLAYGROUND

You haven't brushed your hair.

You don't have a boyfriend.. you're contagious.

You still wet the bed.

Your shoes don't light up.

Your mum doesn't let you use the internet.

ISLA

Wow .... That's just ..... I mean, dial Up??? Computers were so backwards. Green monitors, basic interfaces, no online gaming? No social media?

ISLA IS VISIBLY DISTRESSED

ISLA

And that poor boy? Those kids were saying such horrible things about him to his face. Was he ok? I hope that teacher sorted those nasty bullies out! It was making him so sad.

PAST

You see, if you are horrible online, that's the same as these children being horrible In real life! Now I must go back to the past, good night!

GOES OFF STAGE

ENSEMBLE GROUP REVEAL THE GHOST OF INTERNET PRESENT

WE SEE PRESENT – A DOPEY AND SLOW-PACED 'SURFER DUDE'

Hey! You must be Isla. I am the Ghost of Internet Present and I need to give you a present, it's called your present, because it's happening now, today, this minute, the present. Come dude I need to show you some stuff!

HERE WE SEE MORE PEOPLE WALKING PAST TOM. THE LAST PERSON TO WALK PAST IS HIS FRIEND FROM EARLIER. SHE PASSES AND LAUGHS TOO AND LEAVES TOM ALONE ON STAGE. THIS IS VISUALLY MORE PEOPLE THAN IN THE PAST SCENE TO SHOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BULLYING IN THE TWO ERAS

TOM SITS ALONE. WE HEAR HIS PHONE PINGING AS HE GETS MORE AND MORE MESSAGES. TOM IS BREAKING DOWN BECAUSE OF THE CYBERBULLYING

THE CAST HOLD UP PLACARDS SHOWING NEGATIVE MESSAGES FLASH AROUND TOM

NARRATOR

Isla goes quiet. She is starting to realise it may start with only one, two or maybe a few people at most doing the bullying, but on the internet, hundreds can join in this can easily escalate out of control.

Isla sees this sheer number and the relentless nature of the internet can make the bullying seem inescapable. Whereas a bully can strike in the playground or after school, internet bullying can occur anywhere, wherever you go online.

ISLA SITS BESIDE TOM AND THE MESSAGES CONTINUE

ISLA

Are you ok Tom?

SHE LOOKS AT THE GHOST OF PRESENT

Make them stop.. Make the Messages stop... Please!

PRESENT LEAVES, AS DOES TOM

ENSEMBLE GROUP REVEAL ..... NOTHING

FUTURISTIC VOICE RECOGNITION DEVICE

Isla..

ISLA

Hello..? Who's there?

FUTURISTIC VOICE RECOGNITION DEVICE

I'm the Voice of the Ghost of The Internet Future. I'm here to show you, first-hand, what your actions will lead to.

ISLA

Are you here to show me what might happen? Or what must happen?

FUTURISTIC VOICE RECOGNITION DEVICE

Might – Must – Might – Must – Might – Must – It's up to you.

MOVEMENT PIECE WHICH SHOWS ISLA SUDDENLY START CYBERBULLYING

GRADUALLY MORE AND MORE PEOPLE JOIN IN, SURROUNDING TOM

TOM SHOUTS "STOP" THEY ALL SLOWLY FADE AWAY, INCLUDING TOM

LEAVING ISLA BACK IN BED, RESTLESS

ISLA

I'm going to do something about this, I've been given another chance and I'm going to use it

ISLA VOICE OVER AS SHE TYPES INTO HER PHONE

Listen everyone. Writing comments online can make them appear more important than they are, and hold more weight than they should.

The way I spoke to Tom, calling him a loser and telling him he's not cool, I wouldn't dream of saying those awful things to his face!

We must be careful about how we speak to each other online, and we must help others if we think they're being bullied. If we spot something that makes us feel uncomfortable, report it to a teacher, a counsellor or your parents.

Social media has to be sociable.. and we must use social media for good. I've learned the hard way. No More!

UNDER THIS VOICEOVER WE SEE ISLA WALKING TOWARDS TOM. SHE SMILES AND SITS BESIDE HIM. THEY TALK FOR A WHILE. SHE HUGS HIM AND THEY WALK OFF TOGETHER LEAVING THE NARRATOR ON STAGE ALONE.

NARRATOR

As we progress towards the future, The E-cademy begins to improve, both in academic achievement and also morale and happiness. The students become a lot less cliquey – especially on social media – as they all take a stand against online bullying together.

ENDS

For further information on online safety, please visit **InternetMatters.org**

We'd love to see how you've been inspired by these scripts – share your pictures and video on social using the hashtag **#PlusnetPlaysOnTheInternet**