Briefing Note: Netsafe and Cyberbullying

To: Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education
Cc: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 8 April 2019
Security Level: In Confidence

Drafted: Tara Campbell
Key Contact: Anne-Margaret Campbell
Messaging seen by Communications team: No

Purpose of Report

1. Your office requested information regarding the current NetSafe contract, including cyber bullying.

2. Note the attached the briefing notes as requested.

3. Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.

Agree / Disagree

Suze Strowger
Associate Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support
8/4/19

Hon Tracey Martin
Associate Minister of Education
24/1/19.
Background

1. Netsafe is New Zealand’s independent, non-profit online safety organisation. Netsafe is the Approved Agency under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015; which has increased their funding, resources and profile substantially. They are also funded by the Ministry of Justice.

2. S 9(2)(f)(iv)
   - Educate – to increase schools online safety capability
   - Respond – to reduced harm when negative incidents occur; and
   - Advise – to create a strong overall online safety approach for schools (including guidelines for Boards of Trustees about what students should be able to access online).

3. The outcome of the agreement is:
   “All New Zealand Maori Medium kura and schools and communities have access to quality advice and support for digital safety and security.”

4. As part of this agreement Netsafe provides workshops to schools, teachers, parents and their communities, about the risks, challenges and opportunities of digital technology, and the practical ways that schools and parents can help young people to be safe online. This support includes help with online bullying and abuse.

5. The quality of their resources and their work is very good and feedback from schools is extremely positive.

The Kit – for educators and schools

6. In 2018 the Kit was relaunched for 2018. It is a comprehensive set of tools and resources to help schools and educators create and maintain a safe online environment.

7. The tools and resources in the Kit provide schools with assistance at every stage of the online safety journey – from urgent assistance responding to online incidents, to classroom and community engagement, to long-term, strategic planning.

Research

8. Last year Netsafe produced a factsheet to present findings regarding New Zealand Teen’s use and attitudes towards digital technologies and online safety, linked in Annex One.

9. In 2017, Netsafe worked with the Ministry for Women to undertake research with teenagers about their experiences of digital risk and harm linked in Annex Two.

Youth Action Squad

10. In 2016 they also initiated a Youth Action Squad (Y.A.S!) made up of young people (13-18 years) from around New Zealand.

11. Y.A.S! will provide ideas and opinions about what young people do online, the types of problems they might come across and what we can do to help young people to be safer online.

12. Young people will join Y.A.S! for 1 year to give their thoughts and ideas around online safety at monthly meetings (physically or online).
Cyber bullying

13. While online bullying involves similar behaviours to bullying in person, it also differs in the following ways:
   • it can be invasive and difficult to escape – it can happen at all hours and anywhere
   • it can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly distributed to a large audience (e.g. rumours and images can be posted on public forums or sent to many people at once)
   • it can provide the person doing the bullying with a sense of distance from the other person, so there is a lack of immediate feedback or consequences.

14. These important differences should not distract schools, parents and carers from the fact that online bullying is essentially the same as bullying in person.

15. International research suggests that many students who are bullied online are also bullied in person. This means that when dealing with cyber-bullying, it is important to look at other situations as well.

Netsafe contract

16. Under the Educate component of the Ministry’s agreement, the Netsafe Schools Accreditation helps schools establish, develop and promote online safety and digital citizenship in their school community.

17. Under the Respond component 64% (n=38) of the incidents reported to Netsafe during October to December 2018 were communication related content (e.g. threats, sexual harassment and included bullying).

18. Under the Advise component, Netsafe chairs the cross-sector Online Safety Advisory Group. This group meets quarterly and is a subgroup of the Bullying Prevention Advisory Group.

Next Steps

19. The current agreement is due for renewal by 30 June 2019. Section 9(2)(i)(v)

Proactive Release

20. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

21. We intend to redact the value of the agreement under 9(2)(b)(ii) to protect information that may unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of Netsafe.
Annexes


Proactively Released