



Cyber bullying

“In a Nutshell”

What is cyber bullying?.....bullying is a growing problem now that people have easy access to the Internet and mobile phones. People can be targeted from anywhere in the world and from a number of platforms including social networking sites, instant messaging, email and texting.

The misuse of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Viber as well as email and text can have negative effects on employee and employer privacy.

Recent research has found that significant numbers of staff have come across secret discussions about them by work colleagues online or have discovered embarrassing pictures from work events, such as Christmas parties, uploaded onto social media websites.

A number will have even found themselves the subject of unwanted romantic advances from work colleagues through online media.

Workplace cyber bullying is as prevalent as other forms of workplace bullying, with the added benefit to the bully of avoiding face-to-face conversations, which could lead to direct conflict.

As the use of social media increases, the privacy many workers value is diminishing through employee misuse and cyber-bullying.

Types of cyberbullying

There are many ways of bullying someone online and for some it can take shape in more ways than one.

Harassment - This is the act of sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages and being abusive. Nasty or humiliating comments on posts, photos and in chat rooms.

Denigration – This is when someone may send information about another person that is fake, damaging and untrue. Sharing photos of someone for the purpose to ridicule, spreading fake rumours and gossip. This can be on any site online or on apps. Or even people altering photos of others and posting them online for the purpose of bullying.

Flaming* – This is when someone is purposely using extreme and offensive language and getting into online arguments and fights. They do this to cause reactions and enjoy the fact it causes someone to get distressed.

Impersonation – This is when someone will hack into someone’s email or social networking account and use the person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to/about others. The making up of fake profiles on social network sites, apps and online are common place and it can be very difficult to get them closed down.

Outing and Trickery – This is when someone may share personal information about another or trick someone into revealing secrets and forward it to others. They may also do this with private images / videos.

Cyber Stalking – This is the act of repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm, harassment, intimidating messages, or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his or her safety. The actions may be illegal too depending on what they are doing.

Exclusion – This is when others intentionally leave someone out of a group such as group messages, online apps, gaming sites and other online engagement. This is also a form of social bullying and a very common.



Bullying by spreading rumours and gossip - The worst thing about social networking sites and messaging apps is that anything nasty posted about you can be seen by lots of people and these posts can go viral very fast and be shared by so many people within minutes in some cases, along with emails within the workplace sharing with many members of staff except you – making you feel that you are the butt of everyone or perhaps copied you in my mistake to an unpleasant and hurtful email about you, along with a so called friend texting a nasty and hurtful message about you to another colleague only to have sent it to you instead.

Threatening behaviour - Anyone who makes threats to you on the internet could be committing a criminal offence. It's against the law in the UK to use the phone system, which includes the internet, to cause alarm or distress. It could also be against the 1997 Harassment Act.

If threats are made against you then it's essential you confide in someone you trust so that they can make a complaint to the relevant authorities. If you can't print out the threats use the "print screen" button or snipping tool to take a snapshot of the computer screen and then save that somewhere safe. Or if you have a phone or tablet, use the screenshot function and keep these images safe.

Blackmail and grooming - Only tell people things if it wouldn't embarrass you if other people found out about them. "Grooming" in the UK is an offence and people who have been found guilty of "grooming" have been jailed. *Remember:* everyone you meet on the internet is a stranger and you need to keep personal things personal to you, don't share your secrets with other people and if anyone asks you to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable then don't do it.

When comments get abusive - There are quite a few instant messaging apps including Snapchat, WhatsApp, Secret, Whisper and Instagram. They are a great way of sharing things with your friends and having fun. But if things turn nasty you can block people from seeing you are on line and you can save abusive conversations or print them out as evidence.

Whist it may be tempting to have a go back if someone makes a rude posting on your online space, social network or app but don't. This is called flaming* and it just makes the problem worse. Abusive comments are very upsetting but the best way to deal with them is to get them removed by the website.

Inappropriate images - It's easy to save any pictures of anyone on any site and upload them to the internet. Make sure that you have the person's permission to take a picture and that they're happy for thousands of people to see it on the internet. Be wary of tagging and hashtags as this will send the picture out to a wider audience than you may have originally intended.

Don't upset people and then upload their pictures for other people to have a laugh. That could be harassment. Don't digitally alter pictures of people either because what you think is funny may be offensive to other people. Don't let anyone take pictures of you that might embarrass you.

Innocent bystander - There is no such thing as an innocent bystander and if you have seen someone being bullied online, **you** can report. Ignoring it may feel like the easiest thing to do but the person who is being subjected to that bullying may need your help and support to get it stopped. Most sites now have a **report** button which is something you can do and this will send the bullying comments to the site to investigate.

Tips and advice

- ✓ Keep safe by using unusual passwords and change them regularly
- ✓ Being bullied can affect people on an emotional basis and can have a lasting impact
- ✓ Words are very powerful and try to consider the impact your words may have on another person – once you have posted it / emailed it / etc *you can't take it back*
- ✗ If **you** post abuse on line you can be traced by your organisation's IT department or the police without any difficulty at all.