



Someone you know is **bullying** you on-line

Cyberbullying Guide



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Introduction

If someone has posted false and malicious things about you on the internet or on a social networking site, it may be regarded as harassment. Harassment, on or off line, is a crime under UK laws.

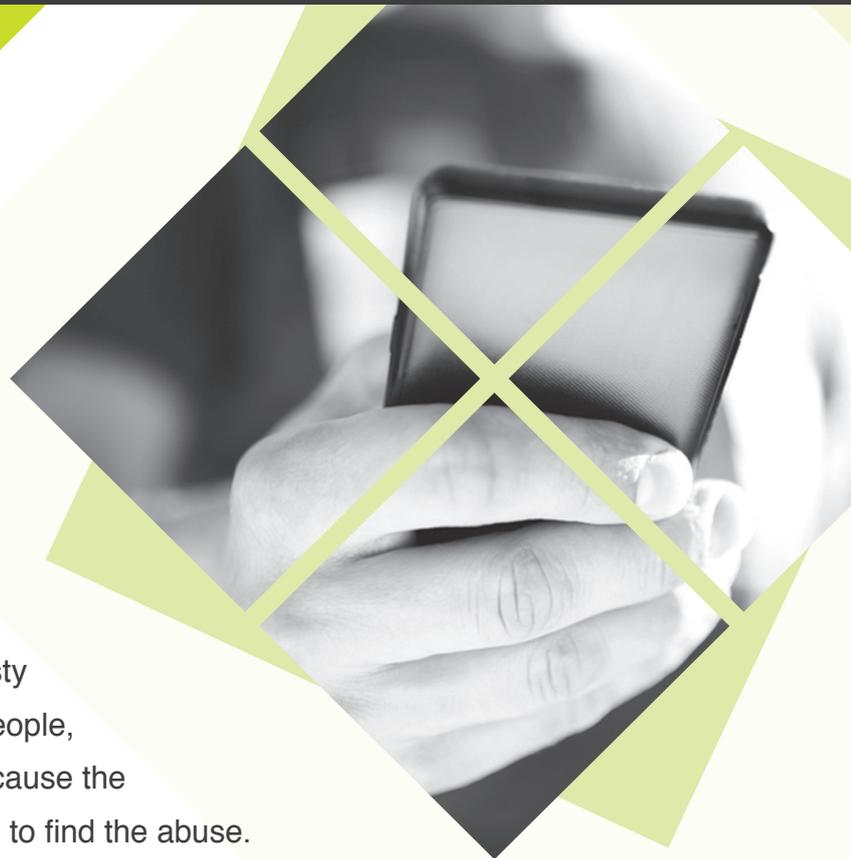
This can be very distressing. Anything nasty posted about you can be seen by lots of people, very quickly, because it's so public and because the bullies make sure they tell everyone where to find the abuse. The bullies know this. These bullies are cowards as they hide behind the technology to bully others !

Increasingly common are complaints that the spreading of malicious rumours and vicious gossip is being carried out by a person who was once your best friend.

It seems you are being cyberbullied by someone you know (or used to be friends with) but you do not know what to do or how to persuade the perpetrator to stop bullying you on-line.

This mini-Guide contains sample letters which will help you strategize your case and deal with matters moving forward. Hopefully, the bullying will stop.

This Guide will only help you if you know who the perpetrator is. It is not a complete solution. This guide simply represents steps you can take to resolve matters yourself.



What is bullying online?

Bullying online is Cyberbullying or eCRIME. It can be any form of anti-social behaviour over the internet or via a mobile device. It is an attack or abuse, using technology, which is intended to cause you harm, distress or personal loss.

Some examples of cyberbullying include:

- **Spreading malicious and abusive rumours and gossiping**
- **Emailing or texting you with threatening or intimidating remarks**
- **Mobbing (a group or gang that target you)**
- **Harassing you repeatedly**
- **Intimidation and blackmail**
- **Stalking you on-line and continually harassing you**
- **Posting embarrassing or humiliating images or video's without your consent.**
- **General Bullying or Stalking**
- **Grooming (ie: enticing or goading you on-line to self-harm, to harm another person or commit a crime)**
- **Setting up a false profile**
- **Posting your private details on-line without consent**
- **Identity fraud or identity theft**
- **Using gaming sites to attack or bully you**
- **Theft over the internet**
- **Fraud or deception over the internet**

This list is not exhaustive.

Your Case

In some cases, photographs, images or unkind comments are being posted on-line without your consent by someone you know, or once knew. Provided you know who the person is who's responsible for this behaviour, you can do something about it.

We recommend you start by writing formally to the perpetrator to ask them to stop.

You need to do this because in all Harassment cases (on or off line), you need to be able to show that you have pointed out to the perpetrator that you consider their behaviour to be 'harassment in nature' and that you are distressed as a result of that behaviour.

- **Ask the perpetrator to stop.**
- **Make it clear that the behaviour is unacceptable to you.**
- **Make it clear that the perpetrators actions are impacting on your health.**

This needs to be in writing.

Do not delete.

Do not delete upsetting emails or messages, keep the evidence. By pressing the 'print screen' button, you should be able to print of a hard copy of the threatening text or images. This will help you to help the authorities and / or the Police to take action against the bully

Steps to take

Your letters should be formal but should be carefully and sensitively worded. Do not be tempted to make allegations based on assumption. Do not use terminology that might be deemed to be confrontational. Your objective, ultimately, is to persuade the perpetrator to take the offensive material off the internet.

You need to set your case up on paper, in writing, so that there is an audit trail showing that you have been both professional and reasonable and that you have written to the perpetrator asking them, kindly, to stop bullying you on line.

Enclosed are sample letters to help you. Note:
You may need to write more than one letter.

Follow these simple steps.

STEP 1: **Create a folder in which you keep the following.**

- Your diary of events
- Snapshots of the on-line bullying (this constitutes evidence)
- Copies of your letters and any other relevant material.
- Information relating to the law and/or advice you have been given or have researched.



STEP 2:

Send letter one.

Send Letter One to the perpetrator by Registered Post, so that you have proof of delivery.

Don't be tempted to give it to someone to hand-deliver and don't be tempted to hand the letter over personally.

Post the letter to the perpetrators home address and ensure you have proof of safe delivery. Keep a signed, dated, copy of letter in your folder.

Leave it two weeks before you take further action.



STEP 3:

Send letter two.

If the perpetrator has not removed the offensive material from the internet (Facebook, Twitter etc)., we recommend you send a second letter.

In letter two you quote the relevant legislation and make it clear that if the offensive material is not taken down you reserve the right to pursue legal action without further notice to them.

Keep a signed, dated, copy of Letter One and place it in your folder. Leave it two weeks before taking further action.



STEP 4:

Contact a Solicitor who specialises in The Harassment Act.

If the cyberbully does not stop or if the on-line bully refuses to take the offensive material off-line, contact a Solicitor in your area who specialises in The Harassment Act.

Google Solicitor and Harassment Act and Your Town

Example: Solicitor. Harassment Act. Birmingham.

A Solicitor may want to see your diary, the evidence in your folder and copies of your signed letters to the cyberbully. There will likely be a small charge for this legal advice but a Solicitor will know what to do next and will advise you regarding the strength of your case.

The police

If the cyberbullying involves blackmail (ie: a demand for money in return for images or photographs you have sent to the perpetrator in the past, for example), the blackmail element of your case constitutes a criminal offense. In these circumstances you should report your case to the local Police. Take any evidence of the blackmail with you.

If the cyberbullying is life-threatening, (ie: there is a real, explicit, threat to your life or the life of someone you know), immediately contact your nearest Police Station and inform them of the facts in your case and, again, take any evidence you have with you when you visit the Police Station.

Template Letters



If you would prefer to download the template letters formatted for Word, please see links at the end of this guide

LETTER 1 Send to the cyberbully

Your name and Address

Date

Cyberbully's name and Address

Dear (Name)

Ref: Images and Comments on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat or Other (Delete as appropriate)

It has been brought to my attention that you are posting comments and/or images of me on social media without my consent. I attach copies of those images which I believe you are responsible for placing on the internet.

- You do not have my consent to post images of me on-line.
- You do not have my consent to say things about me which are cruel, hurtful and/or distressing to me.

Section 1 of **The Malicious Communications Act 1988** states that it is an offence for any person to send a communication that is '**indecent or grossly offensive**' for the purpose of causing '**distress or anxiety to the recipient**'.

I am therefore writing to you, for the record, to tell you that I am offended by your actions and to ask that you kindly remove (*the comments / photographs / images*) from the on-line forum (*Facebook / Snapchat / Twitter or other*) immediately. The behaviour is extremely hurtful to me to the extent my health is now suffering.

Please kindly action my request as a matter of priority and write to me at the above address to confirm that you understand my position and that you have removed all offensive material from the internet, in which I am named or implicated. Thank you for agreeing to do this.

If you are not responsible, please accept my sincere apologies. If you are not responsible, please respond to this letter in writing explaining that you are not responsible and, if you know who is responsible, please write to me and provide details.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

NAME

LETTER 2 Send to the cyberbully

Your name and Address

Date

Cyberbully's name and Address

Dear (Name)

Ref: Images and Comments on (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat
(Delete as appropriate)

I wrote to you on and sent the letter by Registered Post (Reference Number). Please find copy letter dated (attached) together with evidence. I am disappointed to note that the cyberbullying has continued since you received my letter.

As I said in my letter to you, it has been brought to my attention that you are posting hurtful comments and/or images of me on social media without my consent. I attach the evidence once more.

- You do not have my consent to post images of me on-line.
- You do not have my consent to say things about me which are cruel, hurtful and distressing to me.
- I have pointed out that your behaviour is unacceptable to me and it is impacting on my health.
- You therefore continue to bully me on-line 'knowing' that the behaviour is detrimental to my health.
This is extremely disappointing.
- Your behaviour constitutes Harassment under The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and The Malicious Communications Act 1988.

As I explained in my last letter to you, Section 1 of The Malicious Communications Act 1988 states that it is an offence for any person to send a communication that is 'indecent or grossly offensive' for the purpose of causing 'distress or anxiety to the recipient'.

Importantly, a person found guilty of this offence is liable to receive a prison sentence of up to 6 months or a fine of approximately £5,000 or both. You may not have realised this.

It seems you refuse to remove the comments and/or images from the internet, which I find extremely disappointing. If you do not remove the offensive material over the next 7 days ie: by (date) I will commence legal action. At that point, I reserve the right to pursue legal action under the Malicious Communications Act without further Notice to yourself.

One advantage that I have in respect of this crime (because your actions constitute a crime under UK legislation), is that your actions are easily proven. The evidence is explicit.

Once more and for the record, please remove the offensive material immediately.

I hope that this is an end to the matter.

Yours sincerely

NAME

Donations

As a voluntary run organisation, we operate with limited resources and funds. All donations are gratefully received and 100% of every donation goes in to the running of our free helpline and website. By donating as little as a £1, you are ensuring a dedicated helpline is there when someone is reaching out for help.

Template letters

If you would prefer to download the template letters formatted for Word, please click the links below



Letter One

Click the icon to download template letter one, to be sent to the Cyberbully



Letter Two

Click the icon to download template letter two, to be sent to the Cyberbully



If you have any concerns call
National Bullying Helpline
0845 22 55 787

We have the experience and the expertise skilled in
conflict resolution, in the community, the home, the
workplace or the playground.

www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk

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