



October 2021

## Cyberbullying Policy

### Policy Statement

Lower Covey Ltd has a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of bullying and harassment and this includes bullying using technology such as mobile phones and computers whether it takes place within the workplace or outside and whether it is done during working hours or in employees' own time. Any employee found to be in breach of the policy will be subject to the disciplinary procedure and disciplinary action could include dismissal.

Through this policy, the organisation aims to:

- raise awareness among employees about cyberbullying
- provide a safe work environment in which preventive measures are in place to prevent cyberbullying
- ensure systems are in place to deal with cyberbullying should it occur.

### Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying includes:

- offensive emails — sending offensive emails to a colleague (even if this is meant as a joke) — or continuing to send similar messages having already been asked to stop
- email threats
- posting blogs and leaving comments on social networking sites — it may be that a person is unaware that the bully is posting offensive messages about them on sites in the public domain
- propagating defamatory gossip about employees on social networking sites and blogs
- threats or offensive comments sent to a person's mobile phone through SMS text messages
- sexual harassment by email — sending persistent emails to a person when previous email approaches have been rejected
- sharing a person's private data online — posting somebody's personal details, ie those which they would not normally want to share with strangers, such as home addresses and phone numbers — in such a way that they become available to the general public
- picture/video-clip bullying through mobile phone cameras

- chat room bullying
- bullying through websites.

Although similar in many respects to other forms of bullying, cyberbullying also has some very specific features:

- it invades both home and personal space
- the size of the audience can be vast
- electronically-circulated messages can be difficult to control
- the bully may be able to remain relatively anonymous
- it can have a large number of “bystanders” or “accessories”
- much (if not all) of the bullying may take place outside of working hours.

## Procedure

### Awareness-raising — Employees

All new employees will be made aware of this policy and its fellow policy on bullying and harassment, in particular:

- what constitutes cyberbullying (the list will not be exhaustive)
- that cyberbullying is unacceptable behaviour which will lead to disciplinary action
- how to report any incidents of cyberbullying to which they have been subjected or of which they become aware.

### Awareness-raising — Managers

Managers should be in the best position to notice if a member of staff is distressed at work and should investigate the cause. Managers will also be given training in the policy and how it should be applied.

### Dealing with Cyberbullying Incidents

There is often some evidence after cyberbullying has taken place. Employees should be encouraged to pass this on to their managers. In some cases, it will be necessary to contact mobile phone companies, internet service providers or social networking sites.

The following advice should be given to those experiencing cyberbullying.

- Do not retaliate or reply.
- Block or remove offenders from friends lists.
- Review the information you are giving out.
- Make sure you tell your manager and raise a formal complaint so that this can be thoroughly investigated.
- Try to keep calm and do not let the bully see a reaction.

If the person responsible for the bullying is identified, sanctions will be applied under the organisation's disciplinary procedure. The following sanctions might be implemented, depending upon the nature and severity of the bullying:

- dismissal of the person responsible for the cyberbullying
- contacting the police, where the cyberbullying is sufficiently severe
- informing external agencies such as social networking or email member sites.

Support will be provided for the victim. This may include meeting the bully to discuss what has happened and agree a way forward.

### **Monitoring Success**

Lower Covey Ltd will review the policy on an annual basis. It will address the following questions.

- How many incidents of cyberbullying have been recorded in the past 12 months?
- Is there evidence of actions resulting from reported incidents of cyberbullying?
- Have the actions been effective, ie has the behaviour desisted?
- When talking to staff, is there an awareness of what cyberbullying is and what to do if they encounter it?

Staff surveys will also include questions about the effectiveness of this policy.

Note that this policy does not form part of the contract of employment and any or all its terms may be amended from time to time.