

How we handle cyberbullying complaints

Considerations

We are guided by the complainant when we decide how to handle a complaint. We consider the information provided in the complaint form, assess the facts and effect on the complainant, and also take note of how they want the matter resolved.

If any serious indicators of distress are evident as a complaint form is being populated, a note encouraging the complainant to contact the KHL (with the details of KHL) will appear.

The facts

- Evidence of the cyberbullying (images/screenshots).
- Details of the cyberbullying (free text).
- Length of time cyberbullying occurring.
- Indication of family/friend/school support complainant may have.
- Does the complainant have a trusted adult to confide in?
- Other specific circumstances of the complainant.

The effects

Complainants will indicate how much they feel the following (not at all, a bit, quite a lot, very) and how long they have felt this way:

- unsafe
- sad/upset
- worried about going to school
- afraid of getting into trouble at home/school
- afraid of losing friends.

The resolution

Complainants may select multiple resolution options:

- help get the cyberbullying material removed
- work with school/parents/police.

Assessment

Complaint officers are trained to prioritise the assessment of distress and criminality.

Assessment of distress

Considering the cumulative effect of the information provided, if a high level of distress appears to be present, the complainant is encouraged to contact KHL.

Assessment of criminality

If any of the facts of the complaint indicate that it may involve criminal behaviour, the complainant is encouraged to contact the police and referred to the KHL for counselling support.

If there appears to be immediate danger or a threat to safety, the complainant is advised to dial 000.

Resolution options

Kids Helpline referral

Where complainants appear to be distressed, details of KHL, and encouragement to contact KHL, is highlighted at the start of all correspondence.

All other correspondence to complainants also includes the details of KHL and encourages them to contact KHL if they feel the need to talk to a counsellor.

School collaboration

Where the cyberbullying occurs amongst students at the same school, parents are encouraged to contact the school.

We may contact the school principal to seek a collaborative resolution on behalf of a child, or where a parent has been unable to reach a resolution directly with a school.

Social media service

If a complaint about material on a social media service falls under our Tier scheme, we may request the removal of the material. We will only make such requests if the content has been reported to the social media service first, and the service has not removed the content within 48 hours.

End-user notices

If the complainant and person posting the cyberbullying material (end-user) are at the same school, we encourage school collaboration (see above) to attempt an informal resolution first.

If the incident is minor or a one-off, we provide the complainant with advice and a referral to KHL.

If the incident is very serious/escalates/is repeated, we discuss pathways with the complainant, such as an end-user warning or the issue of a formal notice.

In most cases, complainants have been reluctant to have the end-user contacted by us as it may exacerbate the situation. The complainant's welfare is always a deciding factor in determining our resolution approach.

In the rare case a formal end-user notice is issued: it may require the end-user to delete the offending material, refrain from further cyberbullying and/or apologise to the complainant.