# Handling Online Abuse and Intimidation





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The Baikie-Wood Consultancy Ltd



**#DebateNotHate Civility in Public Life** 

### **Programme Overview**

- The context
- Online harassment and stalking
- Trolling, cyber-bullying and threats
- Being a responsible digital citizen.



### **Social Media**









Learning

Interacting

Marketing







Vic Tim of the Hood @FeminismIsLies - Sep 4
The sympathy vote.

If I was a fetus and knew my mother was going to be **Nicola Sturgeon** I'd self-abort too.

#### Telegraph Politics @TelePolitics

Nicola Sturgeon: I disclosed miscarriage to challenge assumptions about childless female leaders telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/0...







0.0











#### POLITE REMINDER:-

This is the first time I've been under this level of public scrutiny and I have to say I'm shocked!

If people have questions about my politics, discuss with me. If you don't agree with my reply then challenge me. I'm more than willing to engage in political conversation so let's have that debate. This is acceptable.

What is NOT ACCEPTABLE is flooding me with messages about what sexual acts I'm prepared to perform to get votes, what bra size I am, how many votes needed for me to strip and comments suggesting the reason I'm standing is to sleep with an Oxford grad (2)

I've been debating ignoring it but this behaviour is disgusting and needs calling out!!!

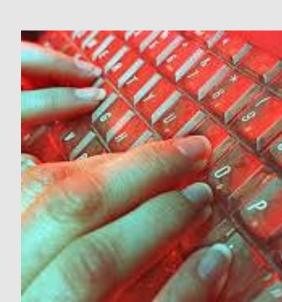
I highly doubt you'll be asking the male candidates their penis size in order to make a decision about their politics..... sexism is not okay.

#justsaying #callitout #everydaysexism #youngvoice #womeninpolitics



### Why online abuse is such a challenge

- Persistent and unremitting
- Anonymous
- Permeate all areas of life
- Reaches a wide audience
- Easier for people to be abusive
- Can leave a permanent footprint.





























#### Online behaviour...

- Trolling
- Flaming or flame baiting
- Doxxing
- Swatting
- Creeping
- Message bombing.





#### James Rhodes @JRhodesPianist

14 Dec

Hey @o2 - please get your SMS working! I sent this girl 246 texts last night asking her out and none of her replies have come through yet...

Details







@JRhodesPianist Hi James, that's a lot of texts! Maybe next time you should try sending 1 text to 246 different girls...

#### Lay out your Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement

Welcome to my page, which aims to communicate my activities as a councillor.

If you wish to be a part of this online community, you must agree to abide by this code of digital engagement, which is designed to keep everyone safe.



#### RULE 1

Debate and disagreement are welcome on this page, but only if expressed with courtesy, respect and politeness.



#### RULE 2

Posts should not contain abuse, harassment, intimidation or threats of any form.



#### RULE 3

Posts should not contain any form of discrimination – including racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia or religious intolerance.



#### RULE 4

Posts should not spread false or unverified information.



#### **RULE 5**

For transparency reasons, users should not post anonymously.



If any of these rules are broken, page admins reserve the right to delete posts, block users and report content to the police if necessary.



It may not be possible to respond to all queries on this page due to time constraints - if you have specific enquiries or casework, please send directly to my official email.









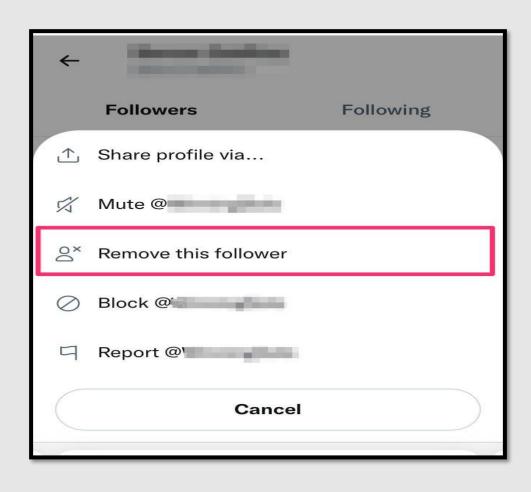
For more information on the LGA's work on handling abuse on social media and digital citizenship visit: www.local.gov.uk/civility-public-life

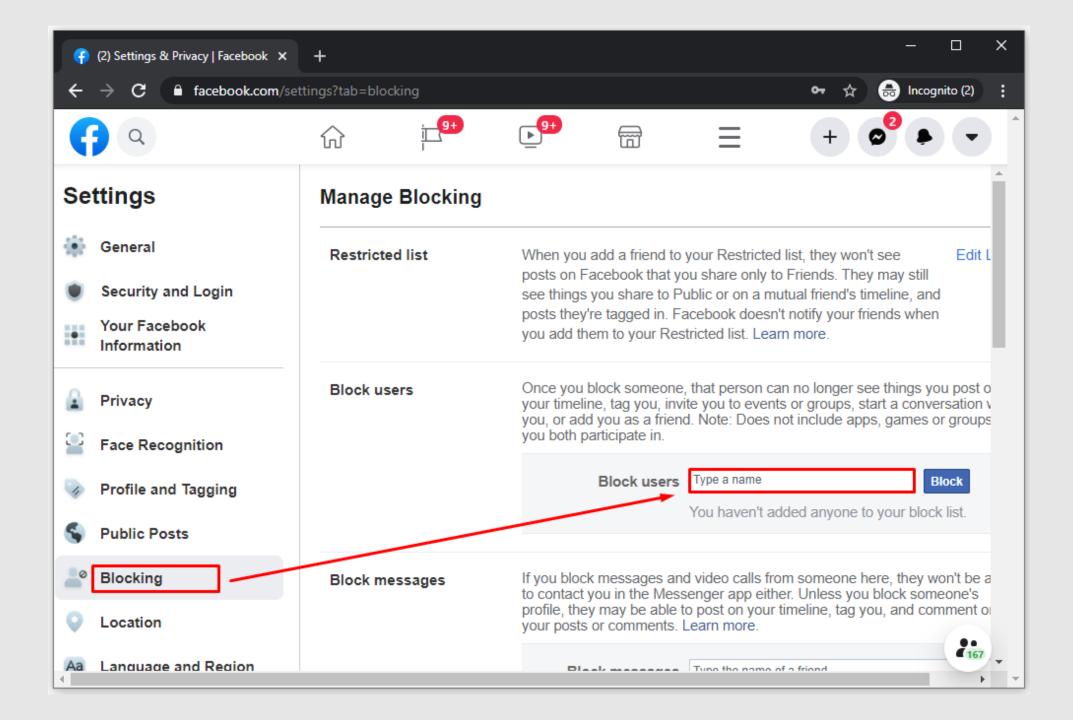
#### Managing your Social Media Settings

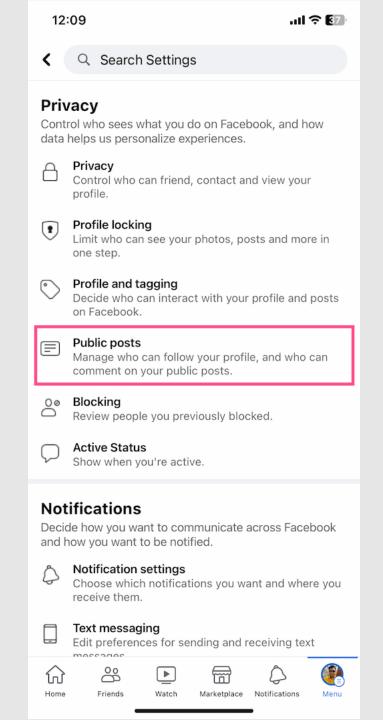
- Privacy
- Profanity
- Mute
- Block
- Remove
- Unfollow
- Turn off comments
- Report.

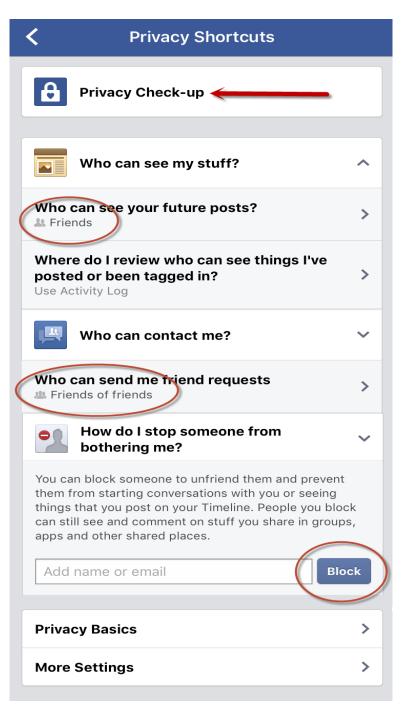


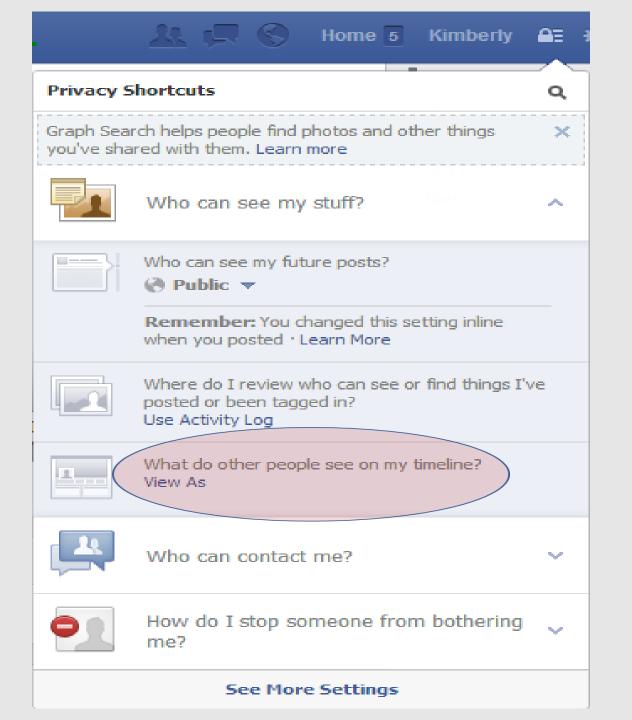
### X – Mute, Remove, Block and Report



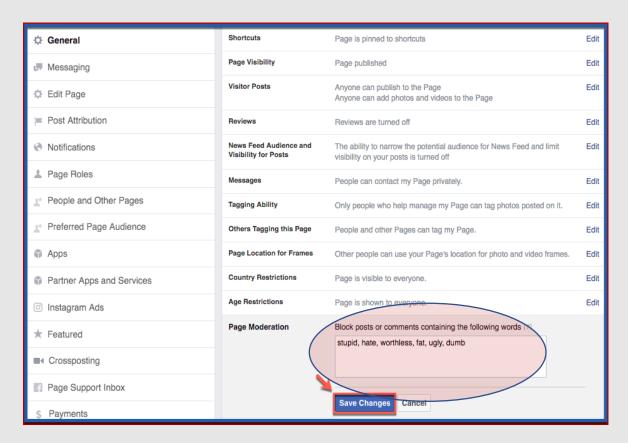


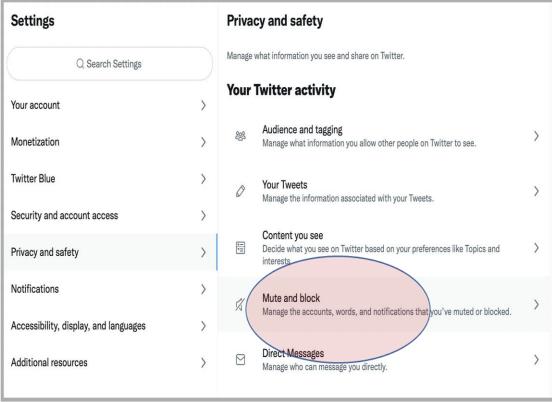






#### **Profanity and Muting Tools**





### The Legal Position

- Protection from Harassment Act, 1997
- Malicious Communications Act, 1998
- Communications Act, 2003
- Defamation Act, 2013.



#### **Case Study**

The chair of a District Council's Planning Committee uses their casting vote against the development of a plot of land into a commercial caravan site.

Soon after, the chair receives a series of emails from the applicant, which include allegations that the councillor had received a "back hander" from a competing developer.

The emails are hostile and become increasingly threatening in tone. One demand is for personal financial compensation for loss of income.

The person regularly posts negative comments on the councillor's Facebook page, repeating their claims.

They also set up a website dedicated to their cause, repeating their accusations. Whilst not being explicit, the website also hints towards historical "personal problems with the councillor's behaviour towards young people".

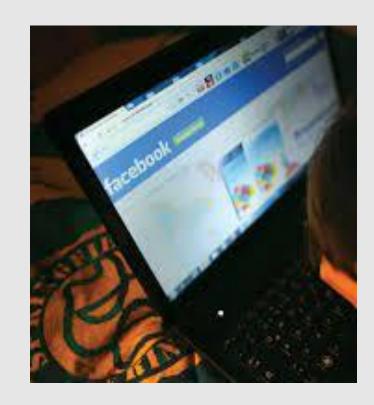
#### **Protection from Harassment Act**



- Repeated behaviour two or more incidents
- Email, messaging, social media, blogs and chat rooms
- Extends to cyberstalking
- Posting abusive, violent, or threatening content
- The messages do not need to be violent in nature
- Although they must cause alarm or distress
- Maximum penalty is a prison sentence of up to six months, or a fine.

### **Online Harassment and Stalking**

- If you believe you are in immediate danger, call 999
- For police advice, dial 101 or log the incident online
- Maintain a diary of events
- Keep emails, texts or messages and take screen shots
- Review your social media settings
- Report the post to the site moderator
- If it's an independent website, complain to the site host
- Seek appropriate advice: Police 101; Cyber Helpline;
   Monitoring Officer or Democratic services.



### Threatening or Abusive Emails and IMs

- If it is an immediate and direct threat, call 999
- For police advice, dial 101 or log the incident online
- Keep the original message
- If you need to send an email on to someone, copy and paste
- Do not forward the original
- Complain to the email's host provider, eg. Gmail or Btinternet
- Can try a "happy to help, but you must cease and desist" email
- Block the sender or create filters
- Seek appropriate advice: Police 101; Cyber Helpline; Monitoring Officer or Democratic services.



### Suspicious or malicious texts



Should be forwarded to 7726





raffensperger@revenge.us>

Text Message Today 10:42 PM

You and your family will be killed very slowly





america@jesus.com>

Text Message Today 3:54 AM

please pray. we plan for the death of you and your family every day. Im sorry.

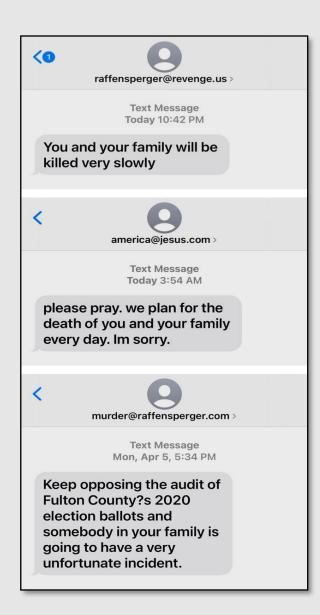


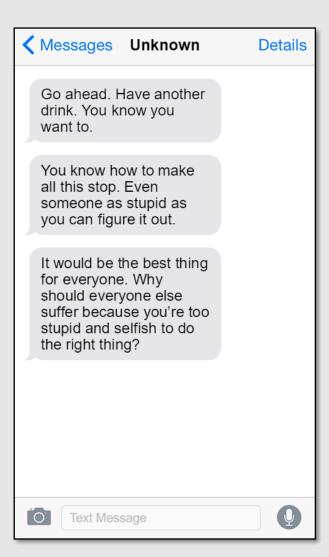


murder@raffensperger.com >

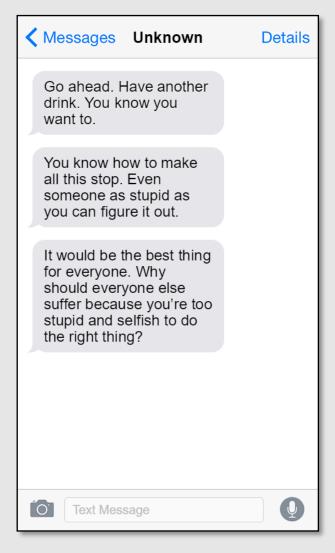
Text Message Mon, Apr 5, 5:34 PM

Keep opposing the audit of Fulton County?s 2020 election ballots and somebody in your family is going to have a very unfortunate incident.









To: contact@palmerreport.com > Hide

Hey, you ever Travel down south?

March 9, 2019 at 1:07 PM

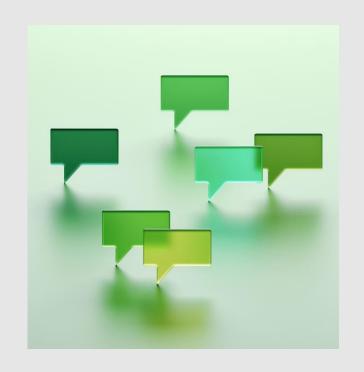
Found in contact@palmerreport.com In...

I'd like to meet you, and kill you with my bare hands. Like, literally choke you to death.

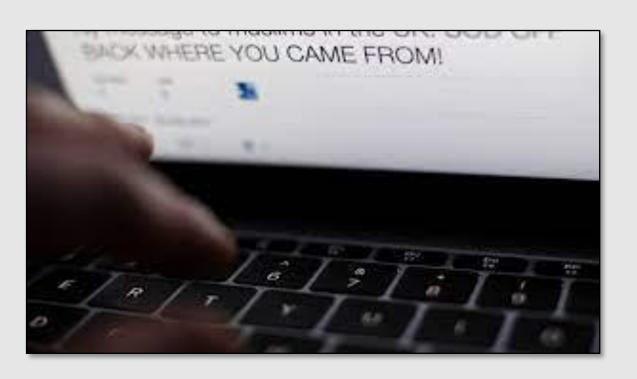
Like, I want to make your face look as ugly as your soul. Maybe I am wrong, and you are a nice person, but probably not.

## The Malicious Communications Act 1988 Communications Act 2003

- Messages sent via a public communication network
- Which are deemed indecent, grossly offensive, threatening or menacing
- The person sending the message would have been aware of the impact of their message
- Intent to cause annoyance, inconvenience or anxiety with a message that is false
- Maximum penalty is a prison sentence of up to six months, or a fine.









#### **Hate Content**

- Can be an offence to stir up hatred on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation
- If a website threatens or harasses a person based on protected characteristics, then this could be classed as a hate crime
- Illegal material includes words, pictures, videos and music
- Hate crimes should be reported through the Government's portal.









This has been a burden in my life for a few years now and finally I have got to the bottom of it.....

For a few years now someone who I trusted to follow me on my personal Instagram account has been consistently informing The SUN newspaper of my private posts and stories.

There has been so much information given to them about me, my friends and my family - all without my permission or knowledge.

After a long time of trying to figure out who it could be, for various reasons, I had a suspicion.

To try and prove this, I came up with an idea. I blocked everyone from viewing my Instagram stories except ONE account. (Those on my private account must have been wondering why I haven't had stories on there for a while.)

Over the past five months I have posted a series of false stories to see if they made their way into the Sun newspaper. And you know what, they did! The story about gender selection in Mexico, the story about returning to TV and then the latest story about the basement flooding in my new house.

It's been tough keeping it to myself and not making any comment at all, especially when the stories have been leaked, however I had to. Now I know for certain which account / individual it's come from.

I have saved and screenshotted all the original stories which clearly show just one person has viewed them.

It's .....Rebekah Vardy's account.

10:29 · 09/10/2019 · Twitter for iPhone



I do not know who Andy Plumb is, but a defamation lawyer advised me that what he did on Twitter yesterday is the quickest way to lose £20,000. I messaged Andy to that effect:



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#### **Defamation Act 2013**

Seeks to create a balance between the freedom of expression and a person or organisation's right to a good reputation



## For a statement to be defamatory...

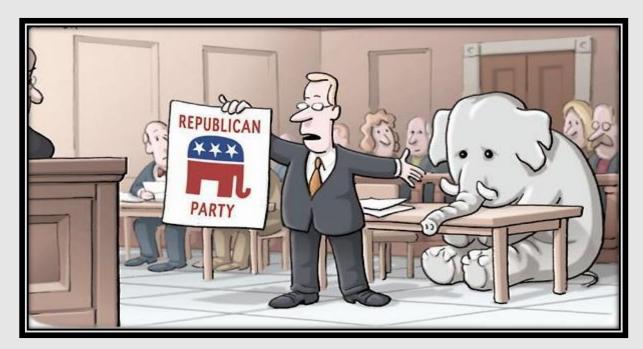
- 1. It must be proven to be false
- 2. It must be published to a third party
- 3. There must be no defamation privilege in place
- 4. It must cause serious harm to the claimant.

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"Therefore, my client is seeking damages for defamation of character"

### If you believe you may have been defamed...

- Act quickly: take a screenshot
- Avoid a "knee jerk" response, whilst you consider your options
- Contact the poster
- Request a retraction, a correction, an apology or to pay damages
- Ask the council for advice on how to manage your response
- Consult a legal specialist
- Report the post to the site moderator
- If it's a website, contact the web host.



#### How to take a Screenshot - Windows



## How to take a Screenshot - Apple



#### How to take a Screenshot - Mobile

#### How to take a Screenshot - Mobile

#### **Android**



#### How to take a Screenshot - Mobile

#### **Android** Apple











## **Trolling**

Leaving an insulting or offensive message in order to upset someone, gain attention or cause trouble



## Why do people troll?

- Who knows!
- Boredom, revenge, stimulation...
- Peer behaviour
- Carrying a grudge
- Obsessed with an issue
- Distance lends safety and excitement
- Some research suggest trolls score high on cognitive empathy
- But low on affective empathy
- Some trolls may have passive aggressive traits.

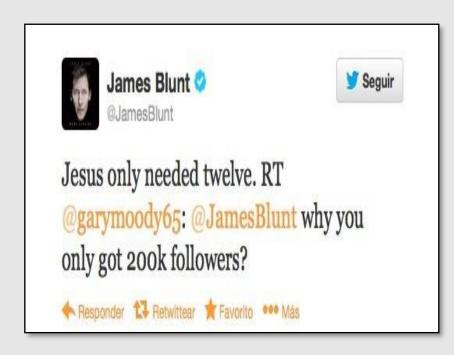
# **Dealing with Trolls**

- Pick your battles
- Dismantle incorrect statements using facts
- Use humour... wisely.













# Other strategies...

- Screenshot a post if you think you may want to take action
- Use your tools: mute block delete report
- If you believe an offence has been committed, take appropriate action
- If you're worn down by it all, consider having a break
- Whatever you do...









- Aims to make the internet a safer place for all
- Major penalties for organisations who do not comply
- Clearer terms about website behaviour
- Minimise fraudulent advertisements
- Steps to address anonymous posters
- Gives users more control over who can interact with them.

# Social Media Etiquette



- Set a good example to others
- If you are posting as a Councillor, you are covered by the Code of Conduct
- Avoid "knee jerk" reactions to comments
- Never post when you are tired, distracted, drunk, drugged or enraged
- Remember to check facts before you post
- Check what you're posting isn't confidential
- Gain permission before uploading other peoples' photographs
- Think before you share a post...



"@feckhead: My parents who passed away always said you were big inspiration. Can you pls RT for their memory? pic.twitter.com/o2BOGnYhaN"

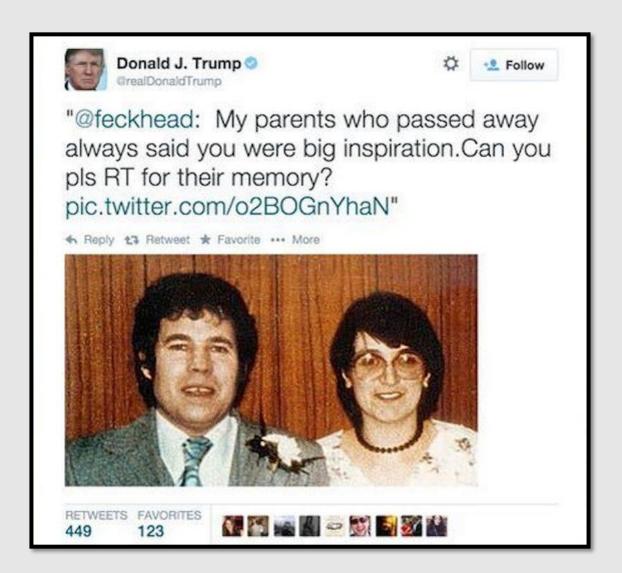




RETWEETS FAVORITES 123 449









#### **Useful Resources**

LGA Guide to handling online abuse:

https://www.local.gov.uk/practical-advice-handling-online-abuse

Government guide for politicians using Twitter:

https://www.parliament.uk/contentassets/358409c9ef7d47f89412becd40f7d8e2/digi096cipr.pdf

The Cyber Helpline (Stalking)

https://www.thecyberhelpline.com/guides/cyber-stalking

Police online incident report form:

https://www.thecyberhelpline.com/guides/cyber-stalking

To report hate crime:

https://www.police.uk/ro/report/hate-crime/hc-av1/report-hate-crime/

To check who hosts a website:

https://lookup.icann.org/en/lookup

# **Programme Review**

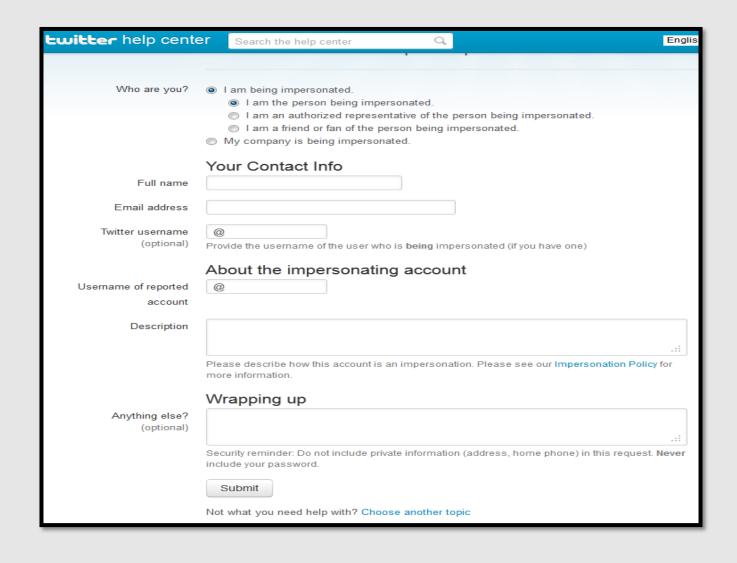
- The context
- Online harassment and stalking
- Trolling, cyber-bullying and threats
- Being a responsible digital citizen.



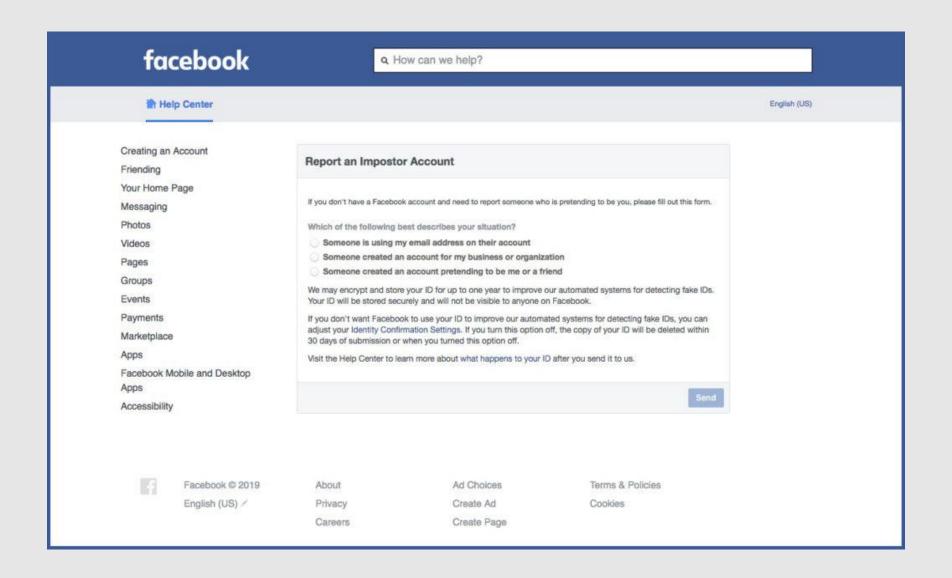
# **Additional Information:**

- Screenshots
- Additional comments about defamation costs and awards

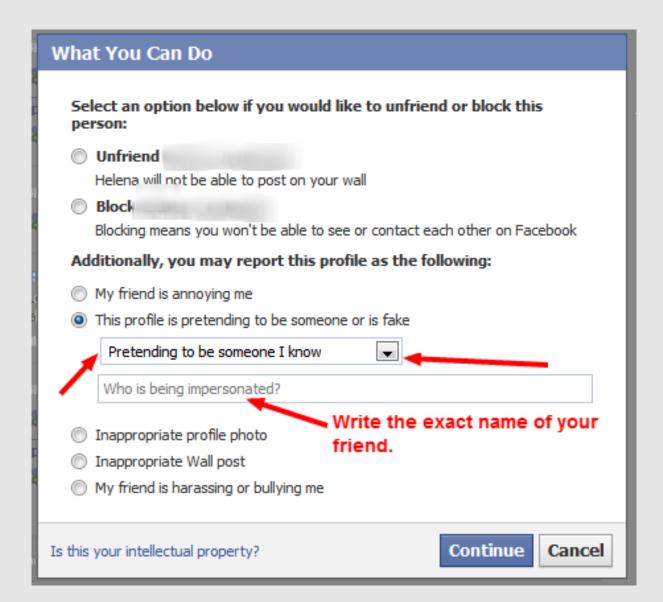
## Twitter – How to report Impersonation

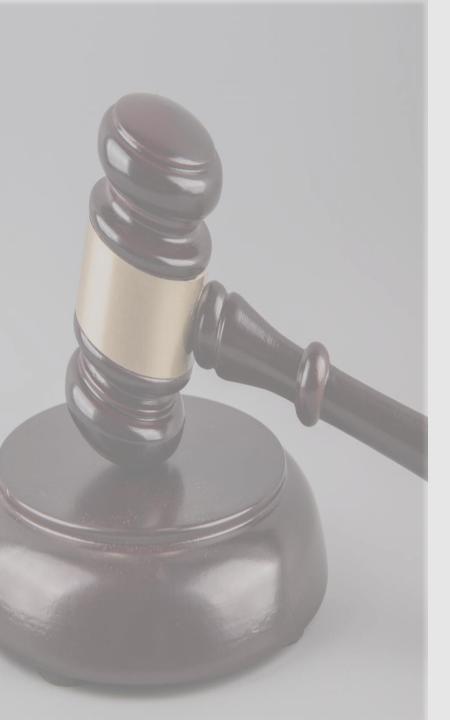


# Unfriending or Blocking if you don't have a Facebook Account



### Unfriending or Blocking another user





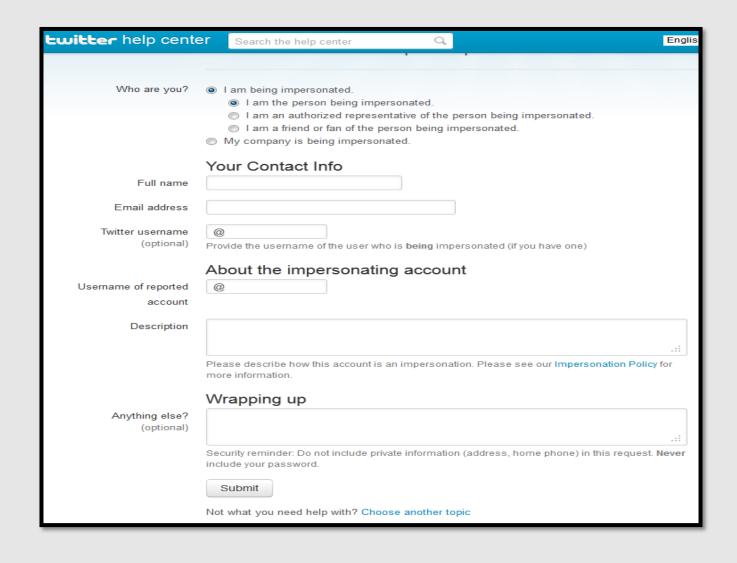
# If the Court decides in favour of a claimant, it can:

- Order an injunction to prevent the defendant repeating their claims
- Issue a fine or prison sentence for contempt if the injunction is not upheld
- Under section 12, order the defendant to publish a summary of the judgement
- Determine costs (usually paid by the defendant)
- Make an award for damages
- Note that a judge cannot force the defendant to apologise.

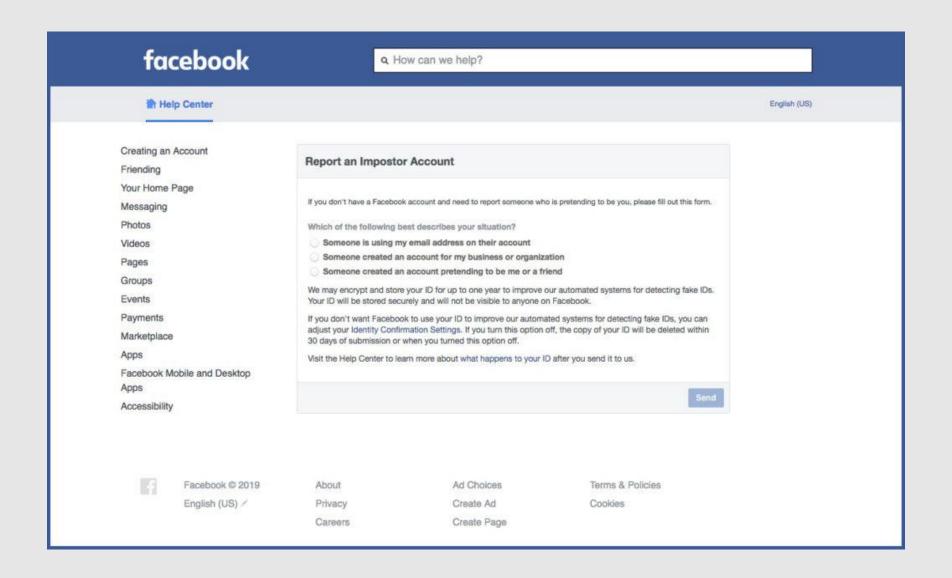
### Any amount awarded will depend upon:

- The seriousness of the defamatory statement.
- The size of the circulation of the statement.
- The financial harm caused by the statement to you.
- The extent and nature of any damage to your reputation.
- The conduct of the defendant.

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