

WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

What you need to know

INTRODUCTION

Everybody should be treated with dignity and respect at work.

Bullying and harassment of any kind should not be tolerated in the workplace, but if you are being bullied or harassed it can be difficult to know what to do about it.

This handout will help by covering the following topics:

- What workplace bullying and harassment actually is
- Legal obligations for employers, managers and employees
- How bullying and harassment can make you feel
- And where to get additional information or assistance

WHAT IS WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT?

The terms are used interchangeably by most people, and many definitions include bullying as a form of harassment. But the best way to define harassment is:

Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Bullying can be characterised as:

Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Put simply, bullying and harassment is behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended and is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

Examples include:

- Spreading malicious rumours
- Yelling or name calling
- Vandalising personal belongings
- Regularly undermining and irritating someone
- Or denying someone training or promotion opportunities

It can happen:

- Face to face
- By letter, email or by phone
- There might be a single perpetrator or a group
- There may be just one person targeted, or many

Bullying and harassment can occur:

- Between co-workers
- Or between the employer and employee
- Or it can come from external sources such as members of the public, clients or competitors

Bullying and harassment also extends to online activities.

This includes:

- Text messages
- Email
- Social networks and other websites

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Whilst bullying isn't against the law, harassment is.

Your employer has a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent bullying and harassment and minimise it where possible.

Employers must also develop a policy statement that addresses bullying and harassment in the workplace.

The policy includes things like how to deal with incidents or complaints.

Employees and managers must comply with the policy and not engage in any form of workplace bullying or harassment.

It is also important to report any instance of bullying and harassment so positive action can be taken.

HOW WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT CAN MAKE YOU FEEL

Workplace bullying and harassment can have a big impact on how you feel. In fact, it can even impact your health.

For example, if you're suffering from workplace bullying and harassment you might be experiencing depression, anxiety or low self-esteem.

It can result in physical health problems like stomach pains or sleep difficulties.

Anyone who witnesses bullying or harassment can also be impacted as it can be shocking and upsetting.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE EXPERIENCING WORKPLACE BULLYING OR HARASSMENT

It can be extremely upsetting to be on the receiving end of what you perceive to be harassing or bullying behaviour. If you are not sure how to tackle this awkward subject, there are a number of things you can do:

- 1** Consult the bullying and harassment policy
- 2** Speak to someone you feel comfortable talking to about your concerns
- 3** Resolve the issue informally
- 4** Mediation
- 5** If informal resolution has not worked, follow a formal complaints procedure
- 6** Take legal action

SUMMARY

If you are suffering from workplace bullying or harassment it's important to remember that you are not on your own.

The workplace bullying and harassment policy is designed to protect you and your colleagues.

Everyone has a right to respect and dignity at work.

I have read and understood my employee responsibilities outlined in the company bullying and harassment policy and will respect everyone in my organisation:

Name

Date