



HOW TO HANDLE BULLYING AT WORK

Many people are afraid to speak out against bullying at work because they don't know what to do or because they fear repercussions. However, if you do nothing, the bullying will continue and may even get worse.

What is Bullying?

Bullying can involve disrespectful, abusive, insulting, intimidating and offensive behaviour and unfair and vindictive attacks on individuals or on their performance.

It can mean:

- ***Undermining you and your work*** – by making unfair criticisms or accusations, humiliating you in the presence of others or by imposing unfair penalties.
- ***Stopping you from doing your work*** – by setting targets that are impossible to meet, loading you with excessive amounts of work, not providing you with the essential information you need or making you work under excessively tight supervision.
- ***Making you feel different*** – by encouraging others to ignore you or forcing you to work on your own.
- ***Blocking your promotion prospects*** – by stopping you gaining access to training, overtime and promotion.
- ***Intimidating Behaviour*** – by the use of direct verbal and physical threats, abusive references to age, race, sex, disability or other personal characteristic or by spreading malicious rumours.

People who are Bullied often Feel:

- **Upset**
- **Frightened**
- **Vulnerable**
- **Worn down**
- **Anxious**
- **A loss of self-confidence**
- **Stressed**
- **Physically unwell**
- **That life is not worth living**
- **Helpless**

What Can You Do?

People often hope the situation will go away and so they say nothing. However, this often makes the situation worse. It may be hard but it is essential for you decide that you will not allow the bullying to continue.

Bullying at work is a health and safety, an employment rights and a trade union issue. It causes job insecurity and adverse health effects.

**For further information please contact: Gladeana McMahon,
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You need to take action by:

- **Talking to others** – seek advice from your family, friends, colleagues and your Union. You need to understand your options so you can decide on the best course of action.
- **Keep a record** – note down all instances of what has happened in detail - dates, times, witnesses, what was said or done and how it affected you. All of this information can be used as evidence.
- **Seek support** – talk to anyone else you think is being bullied and see if you can deal with the problem together rather than on your own.
- **Confront the person** – make it clear to the person who is bullying you that his/her behaviour must stop. You may feel able to do this on your own but it is likely to be better with the support of a colleague, Union Rep or manager.
- **Use the Grievance Procedure** – employers often have what is called a grievance procedure and by making a formal complaint in writing, your employer is obligated to do something about the bullying. They should investigate your complaint and if your complaint is upheld they should take disciplinary action against the person concerned.
- **Use the services on offer** – many organisations either have their own harassment support services often run by specially trained staff or are able to offer specialist external counselling provision. Your Human Resource or Personnel Department will have information on what is available
- **Think about Legal Action** – it may be possible to take action under discrimination legislation or under the Protection from Harassment Act. In some cases, successful legal action could result in the bully being fined or even imprisoned.

Useful Reading

Bullying and Harassment at Work: a guide for managers and employers, ACAS, 1999, can be ordered on 01455 852225

Beat bullying at work: a guide for trade union representatives and personnel managers, TUC, £10 for trade unionists, treats bullying from a partnership perspective. *Bullying at Work: how to tackle it*, MSF, 1995, £10 to non-members

Useful Contacts

Useful Contacts	Telephone : 020 8946 9151 Website : www.unifi.org.uk
UNIFI	
Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service (ACAS)	Telephone : 020 7396 5100 Website : www.acas.org.uk
Trades Union Congress 'Know Your Rights Line'	Telephone : 0870 600 4882 website : www.tuc.org.uk
The Andrea Adams Trust Helpline	Telephone : 01273 704 900 (10:00 am - 4:00 pm)
The Suzy Lamplugh Trust	Telephone : 020 8392 1839 Website : www.suzylamplugh.org
The London Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Telephone : 020 7203 1871 (Occupational Health Helpline)
Workplace Bullying Website	Website : www.workplacebullying.co.uk
The Labour Research Department (LRD) has also produced a very useful guide on Bullying & Harassment at Work which is available for £3.50 from the LRD on 020 7928 3649 or www.lrd.org.uk	

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