



# Don't Bully Me!

Anti Bullying Week – 14 – 18<sup>th</sup> November

## What is bullying?

Offensive, intimidating, Malicious Behaviour	Abuse, or misuse of power	Undermining, humiliating, denegrating injuring	Spreading Malicious rumours
Insulting someone by word of mouth	Insulting behaviour	Insults written down, by email, social media	Exclusion or victimisation
Unfair Treatment	Overbearing supervision	Making threats or random comments	Deliberately overloading an individual with work
Constant criticism	Preventing an individual to progress	Blocking promotion or training opportunities	Organising meetings or events when an individual cannot attend

Bullying can take many forms in the workplace, these are just some examples. It is abusive behaviour, where an individual or group of people create an intimidating or humiliating work environment for another. It can be by someone in a position of authority and may be obvious or insidious. If it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual, then this is likely to be bullying.

## How does bullying affect the victim?

The victim's dignity, safety and well-being is harmed. Someone suffering from bullying may be anxious, lacking in confidence, demotivated, depressed, may take time off work sick, may be tearful, angry, or extremely nervous. It affects their ability to concentrate, they may be unable to get proper rest and therefore undermines effective decision making at work and also might affect their family life too. They may withdraw from social interaction at work and their time keeping may be erratic. Job performance is affected, and can lead to absence from work and resignation.

## Bullying is not?

It is not a 'clash of personalities', character building, a legitimate leadership style or provoked by the victim. Nor is it acceptable to be bullied by a third party because your employer says they cannot stop or influence someone's bullying behaviour, who does not work for them.

## What does the law say?

- Many workplaces have policies such as 'dignity at work' which will provide a framework for ensuring everyone in the workplace is treated with respect, free from bullying, harassment and unfairness.

- If a colleague or manager is behaving in an intimidating, offensive way, it could be harassment under the Equality Act 2010 if it relates to a protected characteristic (like age, sex, disability, race, religion or belief and others defined in the Equality Act) of the victim or their association with a person with a protected characteristic, or if they are perceived to have one. It may also be discriminatory if the individual is pregnant or on maternity leave, or is married or in a civil partnership.
- Employers have a 'duty of care' to their employees and bullying behaviour could be seen as a 'breach of contract' or a failure to protect an employee's health and safety at work under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

### What should I do?

- ✓ Keep a diary of all incidents including dates, times, witness names and what is happening and how it affects you
- ✓ Talk to your health and safety/ trade union representative
- ✓ Tell the person to stop whatever bullying they are doing to you, ask someone to be there with you as a witness or to say it for you or put it in writing to the bully if you are unable to confront them or they do not stop and keep a copy of any response
- ✓ Ask for a risk assessment to be conducted
- ✓ If the bullying does not stop use the grievance procedure or the bullying /dignity at work procedure and put it in writing to the appropriate person
- ✓ If the issue is not resolved by your employer, then an employment tribunal may be an option and you will need to seek legal advice from your trade union if you are a member

### What can the workplace committee or the branch committee do?

Mount a campaign against bullying in the workplace by:

1. Carrying out surveys to identify areas where bullying is prevalent
2. Putting posters on the noticeboards against bullying and leafletting on the issue
3. Holding meetings with workers on bullying
4. Carrying out workplace health and safety inspections with particular emphasis on questions about bullying and supporting and encouraging risk assessments to be conducted where necessary
5. Meeting management to discuss your findings of discussions, surveys or inspections and negotiating policies and procedures to ensure that bullying is not tolerated within your workplace and also not tolerated from third parties such as students, customers, patients, general public and other workplace contacts.

### What will happen?

- The bully may be disciplined and/or moved if they work in the same organisation
- Your organisation may have other procedures in place like mediation between individuals, this should only happen if you are in agreement
- The bullying behaviour should stop!
- Any relevant risk assessment should be reviewed and updated

### For further information:

- <http://www.bullying.co.uk/bullying-at-work/bullying-at-work/> – Campaign group for primary prevention
- <http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/o/c/Bullying-and-harassment-at-work-a-guide-for-employees.pdf>
- <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/bullying/bullied-work-dont-suffer-silence>
- <https://www.tuc.org.uk/bullying-hazards-work-book>