



Dealing with Bullying & Harassment hints & tips for staff

Introduction

The impact of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment can make it difficult to know what to do and where to turn for help. Identifying that there is a problem and its impact on you is the first step. There are several approaches you may wish to consider depending on how you feel and on the nature of the bullying or harassing behaviour. This note concludes on what you should do if you witness an incident and have a good faith concern that company policy is being breached.

Consult your Organisations Policies, Handbook and Codes of Conduct

Most companies have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures on how to deal with bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. These usually include informal and formal action and detail who to go to for help. It is very important to familiarise yourself with these policies and follow them closely. They usually deliver the best solutions.

Without such policies organisations are unlikely to be seen as compliant with their duties under the Worker Protection Act. In the event that these policies do not exist, or you cannot find/access them, the general guidance given in this document should be of help.

Keep a diary.

It is crucial to keep a detailed written record of incidents. A diary will clarify exactly what is happening and provides vital evidence if you decide to make a complaint.

Complete your diary as soon as possible after each event. If it is hard to write things down at work, keep a note on your phone and write it down later at home. Your employer will need to see this diary of events if you wish to take further action.

Speak to the person directly.

Consider speaking to the person directly (on your own or with a colleague present). It can be very effective to tell the person to stop and explain that they are causing you distress. Their behaviour may be unintentional, and they may stop if they are made aware of the effect it is having. If you feel able to talk to the person, take a calm but firm approach and make a note of everything that is said, either at the time or immediately after.

Four Tips

1. Use strong body language. Look the harasser in the eyes; speak in strong, clear voice. Use assertiveness techniques and through your voice, facial expressions & body language. There are two assertiveness techniques set out below.
2. Project confidence and calm. Even if you do not feel that way, it is important to appear calm, serious, and confident.
3. Do not apologise, make an excuse, or ask a question. You do not need to say sorry for how you feel. Be firm.
4. You do not need to respond to diversions, questions, threats, blaming, or guilt-tripping. Stay on your own agenda. Stick to your point. Repeat your statement or leave.

Two Assertiveness Techniques

1 **Negative Feelings Assertiveness**

Drawing attention of the other person to the undesirable effect their behaviour is having upon you.

For example: -

When you behave in that way it makes me feel very uncomfortable. I come here to work as do you, So, in future I would like to concentrate on my job, and you should do the same.

2 **Consequence Assertiveness**

Informing the person of the future consequences for them of not changing their behaviour.

For example: -

"If you continue to do this, I am left with no option but to bring in xxx (line manager or HR). I would prefer not to. However, if this occurs again, I am left with no alternative but to ask for support under the bullying & harassment policy. I would prefer not to."

Talk to others.

It is often helpful to talk informally to friends, family, trusted colleagues, or a workplace counsellor. This can help you understand what is happening to you and clarify that you have a genuine problem that needs to be addressed.

Talk to your manager.

Talk to your line manager (or another manager) and ask them to talk informally to the person you are complaining about. You could take a colleague for support. In many cases, a situation can be resolved amicably by raising with management and, where available, following local policies.

Formal action

If informal approaches have not worked, a formal complaint may be needed. You should follow your organisations grievance policy or the appropriate bullying/harassment prevention policy. These policies will set out the process to follow, which means that a prompt and thorough investigation should be undertaken.

An investigation may find that there is no case to answer or that disciplinary action against the perpetrator is appropriate.

If no policies exist you can still raise the matter as a formal grievance with your line manager or alternatively with your HR department.