

If you believe that you are being bullied, the chances are, you are

Bullying can affect staff at every level of the institution and from all backgrounds. It involves a misuse of power, and is usually, but not always, perpetrated by managers against staff over whom they have power. It may particularly affect women, disabled, ethnic minority and LGBT staff, and can be a form of discrimination. Bullying and harassment are a major danger to staff health. They are often closely linked, and may overlap, but they are legally distinct.

Definition of harassment

Harassment is unlawful when it is on the grounds of sex, gender reassignment, race, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, or disability. It is also unlawful to subject a person to sexual harassment (a separate category from harassment on the grounds of sex), or to harassment on the grounds of membership or non-membership of a trade union, or, in Northern Ireland, on the grounds of political belief.

The law defines harassment as unwanted contact which has the purpose (intentional) or effect (unintentional) of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Definition of bullying

Bullying may include harassment and harassment may include bullying. However there is no statutory definition of bullying, which is defined by ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) as behaviour that:

- is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting
- is an abuse of power, and
- uses means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient

Whereas harassment is linked, in law, to discrimination, bullying is not.

Identifying bullying and harassment

Although there is no comprehensive list of bullying behaviours, and there is no one type of person who is likely to be a bully or a harasser, ACAS lists some of the behaviours which constitute workplace bullying and harassment

Examples of workplace bullying and/or harassment can include:

- constantly criticising competent staff, removing their responsibilities, or giving them trivial tasks to do
- shouting at staff
- persistently picking on staff in front of others, or in private
- obstructing professional development / blocking promotion
- regularly making the same person the butt of jokes
- constantly attacking a member of staff in terms of their professional or personal standing
- setting a person up to fail by overloading them with work or setting impossible deadlines
- regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding individuals from work activities
- ignoring staff views and opinions
- different rules for different people
- criticism and threats
- excessive monitoring
- unrealistic expectations

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against another (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be subtle - whatever form it takes, the crucial point is that it is unwarranted and unwelcome by the recipient.

Effects of bullying and harassment

When bullying and harassment occur they not only affect the complainant but have a knock-on effect for the work area or institution in which they are occurring. Relationships between work colleagues become strained and at times difficult, with some colleagues not wanting to 'get involved' as they do not see the bullying and harassment as having anything to do with them or they themselves may not want to become a target for the perpetrator.

The effects on the recipient of bullying and harassment vary from individual to individual. While this list is not exhaustive, it does give an indication of the symptoms that may occur:

- depression
- mental health problems
- low self esteem / lack of confidence
- loss of appetite
- feeling isolated
- migraine / severe headaches
- stomach problems
- skin complaints
- sleeplessness

- acute anxiety
- panic attacks
- nausea
- mood swings

If you've identified bullying or harassment in your workplace don't ignore it - you can contact your UCU rep for advice and support. More information on what to do is also available in a series of leaflets at www.ucu.org.uk/harassment.