



Reporting bullying and harassment at work

Bullying and harassment can appear in many forms. For example, being treated unfairly in an appraisal, being mocked, excluded or victimised by other workers, or through comments made on social media.

Often it's very subtle, perhaps the way something was said, and sometimes it's hard to tell the motivation behind people's actions - and honest and innocent misunderstandings do occur. But if you're being affected by bullying or harassment, or you see it happening to someone else, the main thing you probably want, is for it to stop.

You may be able to speak, or write, to the person directly and explain how their actions are affecting you, and that might be enough. But if you don't feel comfortable doing this and would prefer to make a disclosure to someone else, or if you feel that the behaviour should be reported - perhaps because if you don't, others could be affected, then you should report the incident and provide as much information as you can so as to help with any inquiry or investigation.

Before you do this, it's a good idea to gather your thoughts, and note down as many details as you can about what happened.

Your notes should include the date, time and place, what happened, and anything in particular that was said and any offensive language that was used.

Include who was involved and anyone who might be able to confirm what happened. And if you hear of other people who've had similar experiences, make a note of their names too.

Describe how the event made you feel and if it affected your health in any way.

Record what happened after the incident. For example, did you seek any advice from anyone, or need any medical attention? If you reported what happened, who did you report it to and what did they say.



Keep copies of anything that's written such as emails, text messages or social media posts.

You might need to capture screen images from a computer or mobile device, and you can find out how to do this by searching 'screenshot' and then the name of the device or the operating system you're using.

It might be helpful to make a quick video or audio recording of yourself describing what happened, and one of the easiest ways to do this is with a smartphone or tablet. You can then play the recording to others later, or use it to help you write up your notes.

Many places now have CCTV cameras on the premises which can provide video evidence. If you make your own recordings, just make sure you're not putting anyone in danger, or breaking any laws.

If the behaviour is ongoing, keep a log of the incidents as they occur as all this information will be useful to the person you're reporting the incident to, and it will also help you if you need to recall any of the details later.

When you're ready to report the incident, there are a number of people you could go to. The first option might be your line manager, but if they're the person you're having the problem with - which is often the case, then perhaps someone from the Human Resources department, or a union representative would be better. Many organisations also have a confidential whistleblowing hotline you could use.

But if none of these are available to you, or for some reason you'd prefer to talk to someone outside your organisation, there are bodies which are there to help. Search 'report harassment at work' to find some of them. They can usually be contacted through confidential phone lines, online chats, and email.

Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work. However, instances of bullying and harassment continue to occur on a regular basis, and are causing things like stress, anxiety, low self-esteem and resignations. So if it's happening to you, remember, you're not alone, there are people who can help, and you can help them, by giving them as much information as you can.