



Stand Up To Bullying Day - Actions for Employers

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22 February is International Stand Up to Bullying Day which is celebrated by 25 countries including the UK.

Bullying and harassment is nasty conduct which makes people feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended. It might not be obvious to other people, but it is always about the perception of the person being bullied or harassed. The behaviour may be between two people, manager and employee or two employees or may even involve groups of employees. It has various forms - it could be a one off incident or may be persistent. It can be written in an email or letter, by phone and even face to face. No matter what form it takes, it can be very damaging to those affected.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- constant criticism
- picking on someone
- undermining of competence
- exclusion or victimisation
- insulting someone
- unfair treatment
- denying promotional opportunities

Harassment could be related to a protected characteristic as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 which includes race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, maternity, religion, marriage or civil partnership and it is unlawful.

It is often very difficult for a person being bullied or harassed to complain. Often they can not cope with the situation and resign.

It is important for employers to have a policy in place that spells out all the options available to employees and so they know who they can complain to. If it is an employee's manager who has been doing the bullying and harassment, then it should be possible for the employee to approach HR or a trade union for assistance. Many larger organisations have harassment counsellors in place who are employees specially trained to assist employees.

There could be a huge impact on an organisation for failing to acknowledge and deal with a bullying and harassment situation which includes loss of morale, poor performance, loss of profits, absence, turnover and unlimited compensation in an employment tribunal.

As well as employees, an organisation is responsible for preventing harassment against:

<http://www.hrzone.co.uk/blogs/sbeale/sj-beale-hr-consult-blog/stand-bullying-day-actions-employers>

- agency workers,
- ex-employees – where the discriminatory act is closely connected to

their employment,

- job applicants,
- contract workers including consultants and other professionals,
- students on work experience,
- vocational trainees,
- volunteers, if they receive an allowance or are contracted to provide a service,
- board members, non executive directors, and councillors, and
- customers harassed by an employee providing a service to t

Employers can be held vicariously liable for the conduct of their employees if they have taken no action to defend a situation. By having a policy in place this will provide a defence.

A policy should include:

- a statement from senior managers
- definitions of unacceptable behaviour
- details of responsibilities
- how employees can raise complaints about bullying
- an outline of the procedure that will be taken
- information on potential outcomes

It should be well communicated to the workforce and training provided to all employees so they know how the policy is operated.

Furthermore it is important to promote a zero tolerance culture lead by senior management.