



Guide

BULLYING AT WORK BEYOND POLICIES TO A CULTURE OF RESPECT

Bullying at work: beyond policies to a culture of respect

– a CIPD guide to help personnel professionals and others deal more effectively with bullying, harassment and interpersonal conflict at work

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Introduction

Our research shows that 83 per cent of organisations – 90 per cent in the public sector – have anti-bullying policies, so why is it still happening? Why is it still costing organisations time, money, staff turnover, absence, damaged employer brand, disturbed working relationships, low morale and commitment? For individuals, the cost can be even higher, with lasting psychological and physical damage.

We're at an interesting stage in how bullying at work is being tackled. Over the past 20 years, organisations have moved from 'it doesn't happen here', to acceptance, and to putting policies in place to try to stop it.

The question now is: do these policies work and, if not, why not? Too many organisations are waiting for bad behaviour to happen, which then needs punishing. They still focus on helping the victim and isolating the bully, only defining negative, unacceptable behaviours rather than promoting positive ones.

They don't make the link that organisational culture can itself create institutional bullying through autocratic management styles, work overload, a blame culture, and tolerating (or even promoting) aggressive behaviour because it is believed to 'get results'.

There's a fine line between reasonable management control and bullying, and it's a line that's often unclear. Some managers believe they are being 'firm' when they are bullying. Other managers worry about tackling underperformers and then being accused of bullying.

One reason why the policies aren't working but don't get changed is that in dealing with bullying at work, we need to tackle the difficult complexities of personal relationships. We need to unpick the intricate and often subtle psychological aspects of bullying behaviour and its impact on individuals – the victim, witnesses and the bully – as well as the organisation itself.

This CIPD Guide aims to move on to the next stage of tackling bullying at work, placing an emphasis on:

- defining the positive behaviours we can all expect from each other
- everyone accepting responsibility for their behaviour and actions
- everyone accepting responsibility for finding solutions
- 'top team' behaviour – vital in reinforcing positive behaviours and creating a culture that goes beyond paying lip service to fairness.

Being clear about people's roles, communicating consistently and effectively, understanding expectations and being given what you need to do your job – all these are also destinations on a new route forward in tackling bullying at work.

Imogen Haslam
Adviser, CIPD

Background to bullying

One estimate states that bullying costs UK employers upwards of £2 billion a year. Identifying and dealing with its causes and having effective procedures to deal with the impact of bullying remains an important – yet elusive – part of managing conflict at work.

The CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey showed:

- 83 per cent of UK employers have a policy on bullying/harassment (90 per cent in the public sector).
- Most policies define intimidating behaviour rather than positive behaviour.
- Line manager behaviour is regarded as having the most impact on the successful implementation of bullying/harassment policies.
- The most likely roles for those accused of bullying are line managers and peer colleagues.
- 12 per cent of subordinates have been accused of bullying.
- Around half of UK employers have training programmes to change unacceptable behaviour.
- While 25 per cent of employers train managers to counsel victims of bullying, only 13 per cent provide training to counsel bullies.
- Less than a third of employers train their workforce in assertiveness skills.

There is general consensus that the most effective way to tackle bullying and other conflict at work is informally and quickly, saving time, money and damaging relationships by following a formal route to disciplinary/grievance procedures or tribunal. The Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) introduced the Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) on 1 October 2004 to encourage employers and staff to resolve more disputes in the workplace.

Isabel Dovere, former HR director of Credit Suisse First Boston, said that mediation is still little used by employers internally. It tends to be used as a late alternative to litigation when all else has failed. But there is an argument that it should be brought into companies before the employment relationship has broken down.

The ways in which UK organisations seek to resolve disputes – indeed their attitudes towards the handling of disputes in the first place – suggest inadequate planning, a lack of focus and an absence of proper procedures of dispute resolution.

Part 1 What is bullying?

A definition of workplace bullying: Bullying at work involves repeated negative actions and practices that are directed at one or more workers. The behaviours are unwelcome to the victim and undertaken in circumstances where the victim has difficulty in defending themselves. The behaviours may be carried out as a deliberate act or unconsciously. These behaviours cause humiliation, offence and distress to the victim. The outcomes of the bullying behaviours have been shown to cause psychological distress which affects social and work behaviour.

Looking more closely at this definition reveals some of the complicated facets of bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviours

Negative behaviours most frequently identified with bullying fall into four main groups:

- personal insults (eg humiliation, personal criticism, ridiculing or demeaning comments)
- intimidation (eg threats of physical violence or psychological intimidation, misuse of power or position)
- work-related harassment (eg withholding information, having one's responsibilities removed, work overload, misrepresenting your work as their own)
- social exclusion (eg isolation, scapegoating, victimisation).

Persistent

Bullying normally relates to negative behaviours that are repeated and persistent. While it is unpleasant to be the target of someone's occasional aggressive behaviour, occasional behaviours are not normally defined as bullying. The exception is where the intimidating behaviour is so severe in magnitude (eg physical violence or threat of physical violence) that it leaves the victim in a permanent state of fear.

Long term

For some people the experience of bullying goes on for months or even years before it's recognised, while for others a single negative act can be experienced as bullying. It's unlikely that a single act would be recognised in the courts as bullying unless it involved a physical attack or severe personal threat.

Imbalance of power

Bullying can happen when an unequal balance of power exists between two individuals in a conflict situation. Sources of power include:

- positional power – the power of a role or position
- relationship power – the power of a group
- resources power – the power to withhold scarce resources essential to one's role
- psychological power – the power of recognising an individual's vulnerabilities and exploiting this knowledge to the person's detriment
- knowledge power – the power to withhold information
- delegated power – the power to use your relationship with someone to undermine and/or threaten others.

Intent

It is not the intention of the perpetrator that is the key to deciding whether bullying or harassment has taken place. The defining principle is whether the behaviour was unacceptable by reasonable normal standards of behaviour and is disadvantageous or unwelcome to the person/people subjected to it. However, the perpetrator's intention is relevant to understanding the impact of their behaviour on the target and in choosing the most effective ways to try to resolve the situation. There are three levels of intent:

- intentional – there was a behaviour that was directed at the victim with the intention of causing actual occupational, physical or psychological harm
- instrumental – the negative behaviour was an unintended side-effect of a behaviour that was directed at achieving another goal
- unintentional – there was a lack of sensitivity or awareness of the negative impact of the behaviour.

Individual bullying

Much of what's written about bullying – and the focus for support groups – tends to describe individualised bullying, with a single bully involved in bullying one or more victims. The bully is often described by the victim as behaving in ways that are, at best, dysfunctional and, at worst, psychopathic. Some argue that there are 'bullying' and 'victim' personality types. But many of the

bullying behaviours are common in working life. It's only when the target of the negative behaviours finds that they are regular, inescapable, intentional or an abuse of power that they become bullying.

In order to effectively tackle bullying at work, it's helpful to try to identify the nature of the bullying behaviour. Individual bullying usually falls into a number of types:

- predatory
- dispute-related
- escalating.

Predatory bullying

Predatory bullying happens when the target of the bullying has done nothing to justify the negative behaviour to them. The bully may be using the innocent victim to demonstrate their power to others, or the victim may belong to a separate group and is attacked as a representative of that group. Predatory bullying is more common in organisations where the culture permits or even rewards this kind of behaviour and the bully feels they are unlikely to be punished for their bad behaviour. Victims of predatory bullying find it hard to understand what they have done to cause the problems. However, the victim doesn't need to have done anything wrong to cause the bullying.

Predatory bullying

A secretary joined a media organisation working for a senior manager. Within a few days, she found that he was behaving very badly towards her. He would criticise her work, pointing out errors in front of visitors. He would become angry whenever he was kept waiting. The secretary then found out that he had behaved in the same way with all his secretaries and that no one stayed with him long.

Dispute-related bullying

Dispute-related bullying develops out of a perceived slight or conflict that has got out of hand, souring the atmosphere in the workplace. One person believes that the other has wronged them, so the conflict escalates into a personal vendetta where the destruction of the opponent becomes the goal.

Dispute-related conflict involves intense emotions leading each side to experience feelings of fear, suspicion, resentment, contempt and anger. An allegation of bullying is used as a tactic between the opponents.

Dispute-related bullying

Two research scientists had been working on a project and when one of the researchers made a breakthrough, he wrote a paper that failed to recognise the work undertaken by his colleague. From that time, the two men would not work together and continually undermined each other. The situation got so bad that they were moved to different locations.

Escalating bullying

Bullying can be explained by the way we attribute the reasons for our own and other people's behaviours. When we think about our own behaviour we tend to see positive behaviours as part of our personality and values and we put our negative behaviours down to external circumstances.

However, the opposite is true when we think about other people's behaviour, so their negative behaviours are part of their personality and positive behaviours are due to external circumstances.

Escalating bullying

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'A belief that "it doesn't happen" by managers. A belief that "only managers bully" by staff.'

Quote from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

How we see our own and other people's behaviour: who is the bully?

When walking down the corridor a manager opens the door for a member of staff but fails to hold it open for another member of staff walking a few steps behind.

Manager feels:

I am generally polite and considerate to my staff, I didn't see Katie, if I had, I'd have held the door open for her.

Employee feels:

He knew I was coming along the corridor, he doesn't like me, he never liked me and he's only saying sorry because he wants to look good to his boss.

Manager feels:

Katie is always so sullen whenever I ask her to do something. I know that she runs me down to other members of the team. It's just not worth the effort to bring her on board.

Employee feels:

He never asks me to do anything interesting. He has favourites and that's unfair. I've given up trying to be co-operative.

In most cases of escalating conflict, neither person is entirely passive. As each perceived negative act happens, one party will respond according to their interpretation of the intentions behind the other's actions. As the atmosphere deteriorates, it's possible that both people come to believe that the other is responsible for the breakdown of the relationship, and either may accuse the other of bullying.

Complex bullying

How bullying starts and continues between two people is a complex, personal process. Bullying becomes far more complex in an organisational setting where there may be a number of people involved, a wide range of different motivations, hidden agendas and scores to be settled. The following four examples describe some aspects of complex bullying found in organisations:

Delegated bullying

Sometimes the person perceived to be doing the bullying (the 'naive bully') is unaware of the role they're playing on behalf of someone else, generally a manager. This form of bullying can only take place if information is provided to paint the intended victim in a poor light. The victim may be characterised as lazy, unco-operative, inaccurate or difficult. Having established this expectation in the mind of the naive bully, pressure is then exerted by the 'bullying manager' to force the naive bully to bring the victim into line. The common 'corrective' behaviours include close monitoring, isolation and the setting of unreasonable goals. The naive bully will have to report back to the bullying manager the actions they are taking to address the victim's failures. It's common for the naive bully to be accused of bullying, despite the fact that the real bully was the bullying manager who set up the situation.

Bystander bullying

It's not always the primary target of bullying who is most affected by the behaviours of a bully. In some instances, the bully creates a situation where one person is picked on unfairly and other people stand by, watching helplessly. Occasionally, they may even take part in the taunting of the victim. Bystanders can experience a high level of distress as a result of being unable to stand up to the workplace bully.

Merry-go-round bullying

An even more damaging type of bystander bullying occurs where the bully selects one member of a team at a time to bully. All the team is constantly on edge as to whether or not it's their 'turn' to be bullied.

Mobbing or gang bullying

'Mobbing' is widely used in Europe but rare in the UK. It was originally used to describe animal behaviour where groups of animals or birds mob a weak member, often resulting in their death. In the workplace, mobbing involves gang bullying and the target can be a subordinate, team member or a manager. As mobbing happens in a group, individual mobbers don't need to behave in particularly bad ways or act on a frequent basis for the victim to feel extreme distress. It's also easier for the individual mobbers to justify and get away with their infrequent bad behaviour.

Good guy/bad guy bullying

There are occasions when two or more individuals become involved in the bullying process. The good guy will apparently be friendly and concerned about the victim of the bullying. They will find out about the impact of the negative behaviours and encourage the victim to talk about their fears and concerns. This information is then passed to the bad guy as further information on how to be more accurate in the targeting of the negative behaviour.

Subordinate bullying

Although the power of the role or position can protect the jobholder from bullying, the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey showed that 12 per cent of bullying was done by subordinates. Sometimes subordinate bullying can be subtle and unintentional but the impact is disruptive. It can involve procratistination, or undermining, publicly challenging, withholding information from, or failing to pass on important messages to their manager. Individual subordinates can bully or a group of subordinates can be involved, when it becomes mobbing, which can be more damaging to the target.

Passive-aggressive bullying

One form of bullying that can be very difficult to recognise in the workplace is known as passive-aggressive bullying. People who use passive aggression as a way of undermining and manipulating others tend to focus on the disadvantages in any suggestion or idea. However, instead of being open about their disagreements, they will resist undertaking any tasks allocated to them and covertly sabotage or undermine the efforts of their manager and others. Passive-aggressive bullies resist undertaking routine social and occupational tasks and constantly complain about being misunderstood or unappreciated.

They can demonstrate a wide range of emotions depending on what they want to achieve. To a peer or subordinate they may be sullen or argumentative as a way of avoiding work. On the other hand, they may be playful and charming to get the attention of their manager. Passive-aggressive bullies alternate between hostile attacks and contrition. They tend to emphasise their personal misfortunes, difficulties or needs as a way of manipulating others to provide them with help and support, or to deflect blame away from them.

Personality disordered bullying

Although it's hard to prove that there are 'bullying' and 'victim' personality types, people with a personality disorder will use bullying as a way of achieving their goals. Personality disorders are long-standing disturbances in personality that commonly begin in late adolescence and continue throughout life. People with personality disorders engage in repetitive patterns of behaviour in their work and other relationships. Usually the people suffering from personality disorders are unaware of the impact their behaviour is having on others and frequently they don't believe they have a problem.

There are many types of personality disorder and some of the milder versions are sometimes valued in the workplace where, for example, to be single-minded in approach can be viewed as an advantage. However, people with more developed personality disorders are very difficult to handle due to the nature of their condition. They tend to have difficulty in sustaining relationships with other people and see their own negative behaviours as virtues or strengths. They will also frequently have a hidden agenda combined with low levels of emotional intelligence and rigid, irrational belief patterns. It's important to remember that personality disorders are an illness and that the person may have little control over their behaviour.

Ten personality disorders and their typical behaviours

Paranoid

Highly suspicious, distrusting and cold. Unaffected by the distress caused by their behaviours on others.

Borderline

Moody, angry, engages in highly intense and stormy relationships. Is dangerous when pushed into a corner.

Anti-social

No or little sense of morals. A user. Motto is 'Get what you want – then leave.' Usually male.

Narcissistic

Self-centred and grandiose. Finds it difficult to consider anything from another person's point of view. 'Over the top' behaviour.

Schizoid

No desire for human closeness. No close friends. Does not understand people or their needs. Often regarded as strange by colleagues.

Histrionic

Dramatic, flamboyant, shallow and over-emotional. Likes to be the centre of attention. Usually female.

Obsessive–compulsive

Over-conscientious, picky, obsessed with details and timeliness. An extreme perfectionist who will point out failings in others.

Avoidant

Afraid of taking any risks or giving an opinion. Maintains distant relationships with others.

Dependent

Constantly looking for reassurance. A good but insecure team player. Clinging. Needs a lot of encouragement/support.

Passive–aggressive

Angry but does not show the anger openly. Behaviours include: inefficiency, blaming, tardiness and obstructive behaviours.

Treating personality disordered bullying in the same way as other types of bullying can lead to greater conflict. This type of bully will use the system to their own ends and won't recognise the mayhem their behaviour is causing. Dealing with an employee with a personality disorder is challenging. HR professionals, mediators etc should seek the help of a psychologist trained in assessment rather than try to deal with the person on their own.

Organisational bullying

Organisations can be perceived by their employees as behaving as a bully. Organisational bullying occurs in situations in which practices and procedures are used to oppress, demean or humiliate the workforce. There are a number of different ways in which organisations can begin to employ bullying tactics as a management style.

External pressure

Sometimes organisations themselves are bullied by outside agencies, including shareholders, customers or government agencies. Profit or performance targets may be set at a level that can't be achieved without placing significant stress and pressure on all of the employees throughout the organisation. A chief executive, managing director or head teacher may be put in the difficult position where failing to achieve the targets affects the future of the business, but bringing about the required changes causes extreme pressure and distress to the vulnerable workforce.

History and culture

Organisational cultures tend to develop over time and are made up of shared beliefs, assumptions and behaviours. When organisational cultures are based on negative beliefs and assumptions, behaviours such as institutionalised bullying can occur. These can appear as blame cultures, gossip cultures and victimising cultures.

Senior team tactics

In some organisations, the chief executive may appoint a henchman/woman whose job it is to carry out harsh and uncaring actions, leaving the CEO with clean hands. When challenged, the CEO may even appear genuinely concerned about the negative behaviours, and may even punish the henchman/woman if things go too far. This happens when the CEO finds it difficult to handle both the harsh and the caring requirements of the role. Splitting the role allows the CEO to be caring while leaving the henchman/woman to hand out all the difficult and punishing messages.

Process bullying

When oppressive organisational practices are employed frequently and consistently, employees feel victimised by them. Examples of organisational bullying can include the organisation excessively using statistics to manage workflow, or punishments such as the withdrawal of overtime for failing to reach unreasonable performance targets.

In organisational bullying, employees recognise that their line manager is not a source of the problem but that the bullying is related to the way that the organisation goes about its business.

Examples of bullying and harassing behaviours

The following examples show the many forms that bullying and harassment can take:

- withholding information that affects other people's jobs
- humiliating or ridiculing others about their work
- ordering others to work below their level of competence for no reason
- removing areas of responsibility without consultation
- spreading rumours or gossip
- ignoring or sending others to 'Coventry'
- making insulting or offensive comments about others
- shouting and getting abusive with others
- pointing your finger, invading personal space, shoving, blocking or barring the way
- suggesting that others should resign
- constantly highlighting errors or mistakes made by others
- being hostile to others
- constantly criticising others' work and efforts
- ignoring the views of others
- playing practical jokes on people you don't like
- setting unreasonable tasks or deadlines
- making false allegations against others
- engaging in excessive monitoring of the work of others
- removing the rights of others
- threatening violence to others
- physically attacking others
- using malicious or insulting language.

Part 2 The impact of bullying

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Creating a culture where "victims" are prepared to come forward rather than leaving the organisation and letting the perpetrators "off the hook".'
- 'Often managers are not aware of the problem and only find out about it at exit interview stage – which is too late.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

Bullying is bad news for employees and their organisations. It costs the UK upwards of £2 billion a year. For the employee exposed to bullying, the impact can be devastating, causing significant mental health and social problems.

Organisational costs

The cost of bullying in organisations includes direct and indirect costs. There is the cost of sickness absence, staff turnover, reduced productivity for the victims and their colleagues as well as the cost of potential litigation.

Sickness absence

During the early stages of bullying, the target may not be aware that what they're experiencing is bullying and will work hard to behave in a way that reduces the criticism and unfair behaviour of the bully. Therefore, it's unlikely that, during the early stages, the target of bullying will take time off work.

In the middle stages, the victim of bullying may feel afraid to do anything for fear of retribution. It's only in the final stages, when the victim is totally exhausted, demoralised and experiencing severe symptoms of stress and trauma that they take time off work. The final blow that leads to sickness absence may be relatively minor in terms of what has happened previously, but it's the last straw and usually leads to prolonged periods of sickness absence.

On average, victims of bullying took seven days more sick leave per year than those who had neither been bullied nor witnessed bullying. Based on a bullying rate of 10 per cent, this would account for 18 million lost working days in the UK.

Turnover

For many victims of bullying, leaving the organisation is their chosen way to deal with being bullied. This happens more often where the organisation is perceived as not dealing with bad behaviours in the workplace. Where the victim has developed symptoms of post-traumatic stress, returning to work can lead to a 'reliving' of their emotional experiences of the original bullying. As a result, there can be the development of a workplace phobia.

Workplace phobia

Lucy had worked as a lawyer in a large legal firm and over a number of years she had been exposed to a range of bullying tactics from a senior partner. She recognised that she couldn't deal with the situation and had given up her career. Ten years later, she was still unable to go anywhere near the office where she had once worked. Even the thought of walking down the street caused her considerable distress.

Productivity

In research that compares bullying and non-bullying organisations, significant differences were found in the style of communication, social climate, general atmosphere and ways that differences in opinion were settled. Organisations that permit bullying also tend to have authoritarian approaches to settling differences and a strained and competitive atmosphere, with frequent quarrels and a sullen workforce.

A bullying culture is also associated with a resistance to innovation because people feel they have to cling to the existing ways of doing things. This climate of fear leads to a reluctance to be innovative or to take any risks. The real impact of the bullying culture on the organisation is that it becomes unproductive, because bullying behaviours require an enormous amount of energy that otherwise would be employed in the real work that the organisation should be doing.

Effect on colleagues, bystanders and witnesses

For every incident of bullying there are likely to be at least five colleagues, bystanders or witnesses who are aware of what is happening. Research has shown that being an observer of bullying can be almost as stressful as being bullied itself. Interviews with bystanders and witnesses show that their main reason for not acting is a fear of becoming a victim of the bully themselves.

Bystanders and witnesses may decide to leave the organisation, particularly when they don't see the organisation dealing with bullying in a firm and appropriate manner. If formal procedures become involved, colleagues and witnesses may be forced to take sides in an adversarial process, which may have a long-term impact on their ability to work together in the future.

Investigating claims of bullying

The investigation of bullying claims can be time-consuming and disruptive. After formal procedures, it's rare that good relationships can be re-established between those involved. It's possible that the investigation process itself becomes part of the problem, particularly when undertaken by an inexperienced or impartial investigator.

The CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey showed that the work involved in managing a disciplinary or grievance case was on average 12 days per case. However, this didn't include the time of the interviewees, or the considerable disruption ie the time spent on informal discussions and gossip around the case.

Inexperienced investigation

An inexperienced investigator had been brought in to interview a team where there had been an allegation of bullying. The interview was wide-ranging and detailed but there was no judgement on what was appropriate information for an investigation report. When the report was shared with the victim, it included a number of unpleasant remarks from colleagues, for example, 'she came to work looking like a tart' and 'no one could get on with her.' The report caused the victim even more distress and made it impossible for the case to be resolved internally.

Industrial action

Trade unions may become involved, particularly when there is organisational bullying. Where the internal systems and processes for dealing with bullying are inadequate or not transparent, industrial action and unrest may occur.

Litigation

If a case can't be resolved internally, the employee may seek redress through an industrial tribunal or personal injury claim. The time spent preparing for these cases is likely to be even more prolonged than in internally resolved cases. Taking cases outside the organisation can also lead to adverse media coverage, which may have an impact on corporate image and internal morale. Organisations that are recognised as having a bullying culture may find it more difficult to recruit new employees and retain current ones.

Individual impact of bullying

Exposure to bullying at work has been shown to be a significant source of pressure and a more significant cause of mental health problems than the other common workplace stressors. Bullying has an impact on the health and well-being of the victims. In extreme cases it can even cause symptoms of post-traumatic stress. If the bullying continues, the victim may become less able to cope psychologically.

Physical and psychological impact

Victims of bullying generally report a range of physical symptoms, including a loss of appetite, difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep, skin complaints and palpitations. They often suffer psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, burnout, low self-esteem, difficulty concentrating, moodiness, irritability and suicidal thoughts. Employees who had previously been able to deal with complex and demanding work can find their confidence undermined to such an extent that they're unable to continue in their previous role.

Symptoms of being bullied

Maria had always been a high-flier and held a senior post in a large organisation. Everything had gone well until a new manager had been appointed. Maria was bullied over a period of a year. She only asked for help just before she went off work. In her assessment, it became clear that she was suffering from a wide range of physical and psychological problems. She had very high levels of anxiety and depression, her lifestyle was poor, she wasn't eating regularly and was drinking heavily. Whenever she had to think about work she had panic attacks and palpitations. She had lost her self-esteem to such an extent that she couldn't believe it was worth looking for another job.

Social impact

Bullying doesn't only have an impact on those most closely involved. Relationships with partners, colleagues and friends can also be affected. Partners and friends may want to be supportive but feel helpless and frustrated in their wish to help. The partner or friend may then become angry with the organisation for not sorting the problem out. The victim can feel forced to take formal action against the bully, or to stop talking about the bullying as a way of stopping the situation being made worse. The loss of trust in people is also marked in victims who may withdraw for fear of further bullying.

Bullying and post-traumatic stress

Exposure to bullying can cause the same range of symptoms found in victims of traumatic events such as armed raids or major rail crashes. Although a formal diagnosis of post-traumatic stress normally means the victim has experienced the threat of death or serious injury – or seen this in other people – bullying victims show very similar symptoms.

Resilience and ability to cope

Bullied individuals may find that the ways they normally cope with the usual pressures of everyday working life are no longer successful. Instead of using a range of coping skills, they tend to stick with a single way of dealing with problems. Often they regress to an earlier way of handling difficulties, which may include avoidance, crying, passivity, isolation and trying to please.

Part 3 What can you do about it?

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Addressing the "head in the sand" mentality of managers and employees. Encouraging individuals to raise issues prior to "blow out".'
- 'To change what is seen as acceptable management to an understanding of good people management. Management training is needed not only on how to deal with bullying and harassment, but also on how to treat employees with respect.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

Proactive approaches

Organisations that want to promote dignity in the workplace need to start by creating a workplace where appropriate behaviours are promoted and supported, rather than waiting for bad behaviours to occur. The first step is creating a culture where the employees and organisation are treated with dignity and respect and are clear that they can expect this from each other.

Changing the culture

The following four elements are essential to this process:

- creating an atmosphere in which the organisation and its leaders have a clear vision and sense of what a culture of dignity and respect would be like in practice
- establishing and integrating a continuous assessment and improvement approach that is built on the

shared belief that change doesn't happen by chance, but is made to happen

- developing monitoring tools that measure qualitative and quantitative improvements in the culture of the organisation
- identifying the necessary tools and approaches required for maintaining the momentum of dignity at work.

It's unrealistic to expect that people in organisations, or the organisations themselves, will automatically behave in ways that respect the dignity of the individual. A number of forces influence behaviours within organisations; including the power of the organisational culture, the pressure of the working atmosphere and the strength of the individual's values and beliefs. It takes time to influence any of these forces if the change is to be permanent.

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Top management appearing to take it seriously and, in some cases, modifying their own behaviour.'

Quote from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

The role of senior management in leading this change process can't be over-emphasised. Where senior managers only give lip service to the idea of creating a culture of respect and don't take the necessary steps to change their own inappropriate behaviours, it won't happen. Employees quickly become cynical when faced with statements that urge them to behave in ways they don't see reflected in their managers' behaviour on a day-to-day basis.

Leadership competencies

A number of leadership competencies are important in building a climate of change. These leadership competencies include:

- relating to people
- personal integrity
- visibility
- commitment to excellence
- willingness to challenge the status quo.

Leaders need to be seen to be championing a culture of respect by having an ongoing conversation with employees about the organisation's values and by providing formal and informal recognition for people's achievements. Senior managers also need to develop and communicate the importance of engaging in teamworking, mutual respect and dignity and valuing the individual at work.

Senior managers can use the following self-assessment questionnaire to check their skills.

How does your commitment to building a culture of dignity in the workplace shape up? A self-assessment questionnaire

The following self-assessment questionnaire can be used to help you identify the areas for further work in building your organisation's culture of dignity and respect.

Characteristic or behaviour Please complete the questionnaire honestly.

People focus	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Do you give people personal responsibility?			
Do you actively seek out the views of others?			
Are you committed to team development?			
Do you instil confidence in others?			
Do you encourage open feedback and debate?			
Personal integrity	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Do you do what you say you'll do?			
Do you show respect to everyone?			
Can you say sorry when you've made a mistake?			
Are you open and honest about your mistakes and do you learn from them?			
Are you fair in all your dealings with others?			
Visibility	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Do you actively promote an 'open door' approach?			
Do you champion a culture of respect and dignity?			
Are you 'available' to listen to the views of others?			
Are you prepared to talk to customers and clients about the need for respect and dignity at work?			
Have you put building a culture of dignity and respect on your main agenda?			
Promoting standards	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Do you establish individual and team goals?			
Do you give personal recognition to others?			
Do you use feedback and coaching constructively?			
Do you schedule regular time for improving interpersonal relationships?			
Are you constantly looking for opportunities for improvement?			
Challenging the status quo	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Do you openly challenge unacceptable behaviour?			
Do you seek out prejudiced attitudes?			
Do you critically examine policies and procedures to make sure they're fair to everyone?			
How did you do? <small>Add up the ticks in each column</small>			
Now multiply each column total by the appropriate weighting factor:	0	2	5
Total score <small>Maximum total score possible 125</small>			

- If you scored:**
- 0–50** You don't yet understand what is needed to create dignity and respect
 - 51–75** Some awareness of requirements but significant effort needed
 - 76–100** Reasonable skills in creating a culture of dignity and respect
 - 101–125** Excellent skills in creating a culture of dignity and respect

Now ask your team to complete the questionnaire anonymously and see how they rate you.

A systematic approach to building a culture of dignity and respect

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'To ensure that all staff are aware of their own behaviour and consider the effect it may have on others.'
- 'To properly communicate to all employees at all levels the standard of behaviour required. This is tough when individual employees have their own views on what is and isn't acceptable behaviour.'
- 'To make sure everyone in the organisation respects one another even if they do not consider them as a friend. To make sure everyone treats everyone else as they would wish to be treated.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

The policies and procedures that are essential to building a culture of dignity and respect must be integrated within existing systems and processes. This is not a quick route to take as it needs all of the existing processes to be critically examined to check they respect the dignity of all employees.

Although personnel policies and procedures, including those relating to reward, recognition, grievance resolution, recruitment, and training and development are important, the process doesn't end there. Organisational policies and procedures should also be critically examined. These policies and procedures may include the allocation of duties, shift patterns and management styles, which are equally liable to create and sustain a bullying culture.

Identifying and agreeing positive behaviours

People tend to only do things that are rewarded. In organisations, rewards are based on aspects of work that can be measured and evaluated. It's hard to measure and evaluate personal behaviours at work. However, there are a number of indicators, such as employees' attitudes and motivations, that provide feedback to show that things are changing for the better.

In the South and East Belfast HSS Trust, this process was led by the HR director and the chief executive.

Case study: South and East Belfast HSS Trust

One of the first major changes was the development of a policy statement on dignity in the workplace. The values expressed in the policy statement made a significant shift from the emphasis on a neutral working environment current at the time in Northern Ireland. This stated:

'Employees have a right to be treated with respect and to work in a harmonious and supportive working environment.'

The senior team recognised it was imperative that the Dignity in the Workplace Policy was made real across the Trust. The development of detailed procedures to support the policy statement followed. Both informal and formal procedures were developed. Managers in the Trust and shop stewards were involved, together with the Fair Employment and Equal Opportunities Commissions. The new procedures were launched as a working draft and a formal event was held to raise awareness of managers, staff and trade unions about the Trust's position on harassment.

The chief executive chaired a steering group to oversee the work. An ongoing action plan was developed and reports of progress made at each meeting. The operation of the procedures was reviewed regularly based on feedback from staff using the procedures, comments from managers and the trade unions.

Self-assessment on the achievement of a culture of dignity and respect

Score each item on a scale of 0 to 10, where:

10 = evidence of a standard of excellence that could not be improved
0 = no evidence of any achievement on this measure

Criteria	Score	Comments
How leaders visibly demonstrate their commitment to a culture of respect		
They develop clear values and expectations for the organisation		
They act as role models		
They give and receive training		
They make themselves accessible to listen and respond to ideas and concerns		
They're actively involved in improvement activities		
How leaders support the culture of respect by providing resources		
They define priorities		
They fund improvement activities		
They use appraisal systems to support improvement and involvement		
How the leaders' behaviours promote a culture of respect		
They recognise the efforts of individuals and teams in creating the culture of respect		
They promote a culture of respect with customers, suppliers and on other appropriate platforms		
How the organisation develops policies and strategies based on appropriate information		
We gather information from employees		
We consult with external organisations		
We benchmark		
We consider social, health and legal issues		
How policy and strategy related to the organisational culture are developed		
We're responsive to the need to show respect to all employees		
We involve employees in developing policy and strategy		
How the culture of respect policy is communicated and implemented		
We use the policy to plan activities and set objectives throughout the organisation		
We evaluate, improve and prioritise plans		
We evaluate employee awareness of the policy and strategy		
How policy is updated and improved		
We evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the policy and strategy		
We review, update and improve policy and strategy		
How the organisation uses the culture of respect to release the full potential of all its people		

Self-assessment Continued

Criteria	Score	Comments
We ensure fairness in terms and conditions of employment		
We show respect in the handling of issues relating to working hours, remuneration, redeployment, redundancy and other terms of employment		
How diversity and capabilities are sustained and developed		
We positively encourage diversity		
We value individual capabilities		
We review the effectiveness of training		
We promote continuous learning		
How the organisation agrees targets and reviews performance on the culture of respect		
We ensure that personal objectives are aligned with showing respect to others		
We appraise and help people to improve their behaviour towards others		
How the organisation manages partnerships and resources		
We provide access to relevant information to employees and other stakeholders		
We protect the confidentiality of personal information		
How the organisation identifies processes which are key to a culture of respect		
We define key processes		
We evaluate the impact of key processes on the culture of respect		
How processes are reviewed and improved		
We identify how processes can be improved		
We use data from benchmarking, focus groups etc to establish best practice		
We identify and agree stretching targets		
How processes are changed and benefits evaluated		
We agree appropriate methods of implementing change		
We communicate process changes		
We review process changes to ensure improved results are achieved		
How the satisfaction of employees is measured		
We use surveys, structured appraisal and focus groups		
We identify levels of satisfaction		
How the culture of respect impacts on society		
We use surveys, structured appraisal and focus groups		
We use benchmarking		

Managing workplace stress

The HSE produced a manager's guide called *Real Solutions, Real People* (HSE 2003) which looks at the six risk areas that have been identified as having a significant impact on employees. These areas are demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. The guide supports managers in undertaking risk assessments and provides materials to help the manager to work with their team to identify appropriate changes in the way work is organised and support provided.

Where an employee is already having difficulties at work, it's important that the organisation provides them with additional support to recover from their difficulties through a programme of graded rehabilitation.

Employees are particularly vulnerable to the impact of overly harsh management, victimisation and bullying when they are experiencing physical or mental health problems. The CIPD (2004) Guide on recovery, rehabilitation and retention provides information and guidance to organisations on how to help troubled employees return to productive working in a way that respects their needs and dignity.

The HSE guide identifies that relationship problems can be some of the most damaging aspects of working life and that poor working relationships can result in significant mental health problems. The following areas were identified by the HSE as being particularly important in reducing the incidence of relationship problems:

HSE tips for dealing with relationship problems

Do...

- encourage good, honest, open communication at all levels in work teams
- provide opportunities for social interaction among workers
- provide support for staff who work in isolation.

Don't...

- allow any bullying behaviour or harassment.

Part 4 Risk assessment

A risk assessment is vital where there is some evidence of inappropriate behaviours or bullying in an organisation or part of an organisation. A risk assessment will identify the nature of the problem, and how the risk of harm to individual employees can be reduced. It is often enough to include some questions relating to bullying and harassment in the annual staff survey.

However, when there have been a number of warning signs suggesting problems, a more comprehensive assessment may be necessary, for example, a confidential questionnaire (a sample is shown below). A general satisfaction questionnaire, which includes questions on bullying and harassment, is more likely to be completed by employees than one that only relates to bullying and harassment.

Assessment of work and working relationships

Your organisation's name _____

This questionnaire has been designed to assess the impact of work and working relationships on employee well-being. It's important to your organisation that you complete the questionnaire so that we can find out how we can improve the quality of our organisational culture and provide our employees with the best possible support. The questionnaire should be completed and returned anonymously so that the strictest confidentiality can be assured.

You and your job

Personal details: **Age** Under 26 26–35 36–45 46–55 Over 55
Sex Male Female

In the following questions, circle one number in response to each statement where you're given a choice of 1 to 5, or answer Yes or No, as appropriate.

How good or bad is your work?

	Very good	Good	OK	Bad	Very bad
The way my manager treats me	1	2	3	4	5
Freedom to decide how to do the job	1	2	3	4	5
The number of changes at work	1	2	3	4	5
Having the right tools, equipment or clothing for the job	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting customers	1	2	3	4	5
My relationship with my manager	1	2	3	4	5
Training to do the job	1	2	3	4	5
The variety of the work	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunity to use my skills	1	2	3	4	5
Level of pay	1	2	3	4	5
Praise for a job well done	1	2	3	4	5
Volume of work	1	2	3	4	5
Performance targets	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for rest breaks	1	2	3	4	5
Length of working hours	1	2	3	4	5
Fair allocation of work	1	2	3	4	5

Working relationships

Have you been bullied or harassed in the past year?	Yes	No
Did the bullying or harassment involve a manager?	Yes	No
Did the bullying or harassment involve a non-manager?	Yes	No
Did the bullying or harassment involve a customer or other member of the public?	Yes	No
Do you know anyone else who has been bullied?	Yes	No
Was the bullying or harassment related to race?	Yes	No
Was the bullying or harassment related to sex or sexual orientation?	Yes	No
Was the bullying or harassment related to a physical characteristic or disability?	Yes	No

If you have been bullied or harassed, which of the following happened to you?

Unpleasant personal remarks	Yes	No
Intimidation	Yes	No
Hiding or taking personal property	Yes	No
Ganging up	Yes	No
Physical attack	Yes	No
Malicious gossip	Yes	No
Bad language	Yes	No
Threats	Yes	No
Public humiliation	Yes	No

Reporting bullying or harassment

Did you report it to your manager?	Yes	No
------------------------------------	-----	----

If you didn't report the bullying or harassment what was the reason?

I did not think it would be taken seriously	Yes	No
My manager was the bully	Yes	No
It would have made things worse	Yes	No

Quality of support

Indicate the quality of the support you have been given by your employer

	Very good	Good	OK	Bad	Very bad
Training or counselling to deal with stress, bullying and harassment	1	2	3	4	5
The way your employer deals with bullies and harassers	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Part 5 Strong management, healthy conflict and bullying

Strong management and bullying

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Getting some people to differentiate between supervision and harassment.'
- 'Accurately defining the difference between "bullying" and "robust management".'
- 'Our managers tend to adopt "strong management tactics" with staff. Our main challenge is to show them that there are other and more effective management styles.'
- 'Ensuring staff are aware that a manager has a "right to manage" and that this is not confused with bullying or harassment.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

Often, those accused of bullying find it difficult to recognise themselves as behaving in a bullying or aggressive way. Conversely, some managers are concerned about tackling poor performance and being accused of bullying.

When line managers find themselves having to deal with a low-performing team, part of their role is to motivate the team to perform more effectively. The process of bringing about changes in how teams work normally involves a number of areas including setting standards, identifying and dealing with errors and mistakes, increasing productivity, greater flexibility of roles, changing priorities and reducing unreasonable expenditure.

If these changes are introduced and managed correctly, they can bring about the necessary business improvements with little or no employee distress. However, if the line manager fails in their handling of the change, accusations of bullying can occur.

Table 1 looks at different ways of tackling poorly performing teams and distinguishing between strong management and bullying behaviour.

Table 1: Differences between strong management and bullying behaviour when tackling poorly performing teams

Addressing poor performance in teams	Strong management	Bullying
Identifying the performance issue	Involves looking at all the potential reasons for poor performance eg people, systems, training and equipment	No attempt to identify the nature or source of the poor performance
Seeking the views of the team or individual to identify the cause of the unacceptable level of performance	The team takes part in looking for the source of the problems in performance and helps the manager to identify solutions for the whole team	No discussion of the cause of the performance deficit, or opportunities for the team members to discuss their difficulties
Agreeing new standards of performance with all team members	Involves setting and agreeing standards of performance and behaviours for each team member and the manager	Imposing new standards without team discussion on appropriate standards of performance or behaviour
Agreeing the method and timing of monitoring/auditing team performance	Wherever possible the team or team member takes part in the monitoring process. The outcome of the monitoring is openly discussed	Without agreeing standards, the monitoring can occur at any time and can involve areas that are unexpected by team members
Failure to achieve the standards of performance is dealt with as a performance-improvement issue	Opportunities are taken to identify individuals who are struggling, and support is provided. Where individuals are unwilling to comply with the agreed performance-improvement process, disciplinary actions may be taken	Individuals who fail to achieve the standards of performance are put under pressure to conform. This may include ridicule, criticism, shouting, withholding of benefits, demotion, teasing or sarcasm
Recognising positive contributions	Recognises and rewards improvements in performance, attitudes and behaviours	With no monitoring, it's impossible to recognise where there have been positive contributions. Rewards and recognition are therefore arbitrary and open to acts of favouritism

Healthy conflict and bullying

A certain amount of competition is normal and important in working life. However, bullying is different from normal conflicts because it involves unfair and unethical behaviours that cause extreme distress and disruption to the individual, group and ultimately the whole organisation.

The World Health Organisation (2003) produced a guide to raise awareness of bullying and psychological harassment at work in which they chart the contrasts between healthy conflicts and bullying situations (Table 2).

Table 2: Differences between healthy conflict and bullying situations

Healthy conflicts	Bullying situations
Clear roles and tasks	Role ambiguity
Collaborative relations	Unco-operative behaviour/boycott
Common and shared objectives	Lack of foresight
Explicit interpersonal relations	Ambiguous interpersonal relations
Healthy organisations	Organisational flaws
Ethical behaviour	Unethical activities
Occasional clashes and confrontation	Long-lasting and systematic disputes
Open and frank strategies	Equivocal strategies
Open conflict and discussion	Covert actions and denial of conflict
Straightforward communication	Oblique and evasive communication

One of the most important ways to distinguish between healthy conflicts and destructive situations that may lead to bullying is to identify the type of issue involved. Conflicts can be related to an issue, idea or task, or to a personal value or belief. The resolution of issue-related conflicts are generally easier to achieve than a conflict related to strongly held values or beliefs.

Issue-related conflict

For example, a work group may have a conflict in deciding what strategy to pursue or how to allocate responsibilities. These conflicts can have a fruitful outcome if managed correctly. Problem-solving approaches allow participants to vigorously debate the issues involved and come to a creative solution.

Personal conflict

Personal conflict involves issues that threaten the individual's identity or values system and are characterised by intensely negative interpersonal clashes. The types of issues involved in personal conflict are commonly viewed as non-negotiable. It is therefore much more difficult to deal with personal conflict than issue-related conflict.

Part 6 A policy for dealing positively with bullying

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Describing acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and changing people's views. Making them understand how their actions/words are interpreted.'
- 'Encouraging everyone not to tolerate bullying – not just the victims. Encouraging witnesses to come forward without fear of repercussions.'
- 'Ensuring clarity about the standards of behaviour expected to make it easier for all individuals to be fully aware of their responsibilities to others. We need open communication to build confidence in our staff so that they feel at ease reporting this type of behaviour and believe appropriate action will be taken.'
- 'Helping employees understand that it is the view of the victim that matters and what may be considered acceptable behaviour now may not be in the future.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

The CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey found that in the majority of anti-bullying policies, the focus is on defining negative behaviours without also describing positive behaviours, or expectations of boundaries in working relationships.

Here is an example of a policy that aims to identify positive behaviours and the benefits they can bring to organisations and individuals. A statement telling employees they are all equally entitled to be treated with respect and expect fair treatment from all of their work colleagues can be a potent catalyst for the cultural change needed to create a climate where bullying is not tolerated.

An example of a dignity at work policy

Statement

'Our organisation' is committed to working towards creating a working climate in which all employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

The aims of the Dignity at Work Policy are to:

- ensure the dignity at work of all our employees
- respect and value differences
- make full use of the talents of all the workforce
- prevent acts of discrimination, exclusion, unfair treatment and other negative or demeaning behaviours
- demonstrate our commitment to equal opportunities for all
- be open and constructive in our communications
- handle conflict creatively
- be fair and just in our dealings
- educate our workforce in the development of positive behaviours.

Benefits – the Dignity at Work Policy:

- proactively works to build happy and productive working relationships
- encourages the constructive discussion of differences of views and approaches
- deals firmly but fairly with negative behaviours, including bullying and harassment.

This approach benefits the organisation and the employee by:

- providing clear examples of the positive behaviours that it expects from all its employees
- providing training and support in resolving difference and conflict
- monitoring the organisational culture and climate
- providing effective and fair processes and procedures for dealing with negative behaviours including bullying and harassment.

Principles – ‘our Organisation’ will:

- 1 Protect the dignity of all our employees.
- 2 Review all policies and procedures so that they are consistent with the principles of justice, fairness and respect for employees and the organisation.
- 3 Ensure that there are appropriate procedures, systems and campaigns in place to promote the dignity of the employee at work.
- 4 Educate all employees on their personal responsibility to behave in a way that respects the dignity of fellow workers.
- 5 Audit and review the key indicators of adherence to the dignity at work standards.
- 6 Provide advice, information and support that protects the dignity of our workers.
- 7 Raise awareness of the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures, making training and education available at all levels in the organisation.
- 8 Develop systems to assess the effectiveness of our actions and interventions.

Part 7 Training to create dignity at work

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Helping employees understand that it is the view of the victim that matters and what may be considered acceptable behaviour now may not be in the future.'
- 'Increasing our manager's confidence in dealing with unacceptable behaviour.'
- 'Encouraging all individuals to accept personal responsibility for their actions and behaviour, and to participate in resolving issues.'
- 'Not being afraid to admit it happens at a senior level. Disbanding the power base of some individuals by ensuring that they know how to behave and why.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

Increasing awareness of and skills in creating an environment that recognises and protects dignity in the workplace is essential to effectively tackling bullying at work.

This training should include everyone in the workforce, from the most senior managers to the newest recruit. We've provided below an outline of basic awareness training that everyone in the organisation could undertake. Also included is an overview of what a specialist training programme could cover for people who have specific roles in implementing a dignity at work policy.

Core training

Training should be given to everyone in the organisation when a dignity at work policy is introduced. It should be used to involve the entire workforce in establishing what it means to treat colleagues with dignity and respect. Ideally, it is undertaken by team leaders who should be given appropriate training materials and may be supported by HR or a member of the dignity at work team.

The core training should cover:

- an outline of the policy and procedures
- the way in which the policy and procedures link to the organisation's values and behaviours
- identifying the behaviours that a team would describe as demonstrating dignity and respect within their particular team
- how to deal with instances where team members or others behave badly
- the guidance and support that is available to anyone that believes that they are being treated unfairly or bullied.

Employee training

Being able to speak up and express ourselves clearly when feeling dismissed, excluded or bullied is an important skill. There are some common difficulties that employees experience where assertiveness skills can be used to resolve the difficulties. These include:

- handling interruptions
- communicating needs
- handling clashes of values
- speaking up at meetings
- holding your ground
- saying 'no' positively
- handling conflict
- asking for clarification
- dealing with criticisms.

There are a number of basic rights that are essential to creating dignity in the workplace (Dickson 1982). Acknowledging these rights openly in the

organisation can empower individual employees to behave assertively. It can also be a potent message to encourage employees to take responsibility for managing their personal relationships positively and constructively.

My rights

- 1 To be treated with respect.
- 2 To express my own feelings.
- 3 To express my opinions and values.
- 4 To say 'no' to unreasonable requests.
- 5 To make mistakes.
- 6 To change my mind.
- 7 To say I don't understand.
- 8 To ask for help.

My responsibilities

- 1 To protect the rights of others.
- 2 To listen to the views of others.
- 3 To be fair and just in my dealings.

Line manager training

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Line managers do not challenge unacceptable behaviour as they seem to be frightened of being accused of bullying themselves. They feel if they ignore disputes they will go away.'
- 'Line managers need to be more proactive at dealing with issues at the informal stage, rather than acting as a post box for complaints to go through to formal stage with HR.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

The line manager's role is vital in recognising the signs of bullying and working with those involved towards a quick and fair resolution. Although HR can support the line manager in their role of identifying, managing and dealing with inappropriate behaviours, the line manager needs to set the standard of behaviour for the team. Often, by the time the HR department gets involved in a bullying case, team relationships have already broken down and may be beyond repair, resulting in formal grievance/disciplinary procedures or even tribunals.

As well as understanding the policy and procedures, the line manager also needs to be able to recognise when relationships within the team are becoming strained and how to deal with any conflict that may arise.

The line manager's training should cover:

- listening and responding skills
- challenging and reframing skills
- awareness of mediation skills
- counselling skills
- knowledge of the disciplinary and grievance processes.

Buddy/listener training

Many organisations have introduced internal but independent bullying advisers and supporters who are able to listen to employees experiencing personal difficulties with their manager or colleagues. The role of the buddy/listener is to provide confidential information on the policies and procedures and to help the troubled employee identify the most appropriate action for their circumstances.

The buddy/listener training should include:

- developing an in-depth awareness of the dignity at work policy and procedures
- advanced listening and responding skills
- awareness of the impact of bullying on the health and well-being of employees
- developing their ability to use consultative support/supervision to protect themselves and to help them stay effective in a role that can be personally draining.

Mediator training

The use of mediators as part of the informal process for dealing with bullying and harassment at work has been shown to be highly successful in reducing the number of cases that have gone to the formal process or ended up in industrial tribunals.

The mediation training should include:

- developing an in-depth awareness of the dignity at work policy and procedures
- gaining an understanding of the difference between healthy and destructive conflict
- ways to separate personal values and beliefs from facts
- reflective listening
- how to assess whether mediation is appropriate
- guidance on setting up a mediation process
- mediation skills
- developing the ability to use consultative support/supervision for self-protection.

Investigator training

In some cases where there has been an allegation of bullying, it's not possible or appropriate to use informal resolution processes. Where formal investigations are the best approach to resolving an allegation of bullying or harassment, it's essential that all those involved are trained and skilled in taking statements and in the formal hearing process. Failure to train line managers and HR in these skills can result in costly litigation and damage to morale, motivation and employer brand.

Investigator training should include:

- developing an in-depth knowledge of the dignity at work policy and procedures
- gaining an in-depth knowledge of the disciplinary and grievance procedures
- interviewing skills
- objective thinking skills
- reflective listening
- checking-out and challenging skills
- report-writing and communication skills
- developing the ability to use consultative support/supervision for self-protection.

Part 8 Approaches to dealing with claims of bullying at work

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Employees having the confidence to raise issues informally so we can tackle them. Once the situation becomes formal it is almost impossible to rebuild relationships – or it is certainly a lot harder.'
- 'Getting line managers/supervisors involved informally early on, instead of leaving the problem to escalate and become more formal.'
- 'Convincing people that it is OK to tell someone and that, even if the person is more senior, they have a right to be treated in a fair way.'

Quotes from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

The most effective way to deal with bad behaviours in the workplace is to deal with them before they become regular or 'accepted' ways of behaving. Organisations with existing cultures based on the values of dignity and respect will find it easier to create environments without bullying and other negative behaviours. However, even in the best organisations, there will be occasions when an employee will feel that they are being victimised, ignored or treated unfairly.

Is there a problem?

Not everything that causes employees to become upset is bullying. Whenever people feel that they have been treated unfairly, it's useful to help them consider whether there is any truth or justice in what has been said or done. For example, to have our work criticised is only bullying when the criticism is unfair or overly harsh.

Sometimes the circumstances of the bad behaviours are so extreme that a formal complaint or grievance is the only action. However, in most situations, informal processes can find a solution that works and in many cases can improve working relationships. It's important that all employees are aware of the ways that interpersonal difficulties can be addressed.

Informal processes

Talking to the person concerned

Appropriate when...

- There are times when the working relationship is acceptable.
- The problems are recent.
- Both parties are assertive (ie not passive or aggressive).

Not appropriate when...

- There have been threats or threatening behaviour.

What should you do?

Before the meeting...

- Identify the behaviours that are experienced as unpleasant or bullying.
- Be specific (times, frequency).
- Keep a diary.

At the meeting...

- Clearly describe the behaviour to the offending person.
- Say that it is unwanted.
- Describe the appropriate behaviour that should be used.
- Seek agreement.

Benefits

- Issues can be resolved quickly.
- Relationships can be improved.

Writing a letter

Appropriate when...

- Talking to the person has not brought about the expected results.
- A meeting is not possible (eg distance, timing).

Not appropriate when...

- The person is unable to deal with the potential responses to the letter.
- The person is unprepared to talk about the difficulties directly.

What should you do?

Before writing the letter...

- Identify the behaviours that you want the person to change.
- Identify alternative, appropriate behaviours.

When writing the letter...

- Clearly describe the negative behaviours.
- Explain why the behaviours are unwanted.
- Describe the alternative, appropriate behaviours.
- Say how you want the situation resolved (eg a meeting or acknowledgement of the letter).

What shouldn't you do?

- Don't make the letter too long.
- Don't personalise the bad behaviours (eg say 'the behaviour was disrespectful' rather than 'you are disrespectful').
- Don't be too emotional/emotive in your language.

Benefits

- It allows preparation time.
- It enables you to say what you want.
- It acts as a record.

Informal processes Continued

Mediation

Appropriate when...

- There is a need for support in dealing with a problem.
- There is agreement on the existence of an issue.
- Both parties are willing to work for a win–win solution.

Not appropriate when...

- One or more people are unwilling to take part in the process.
- There has been serious bullying or victimisation.
- The parties are not able or prepared to negotiate.

What should you do?

- Contact a mediator (this may be a trained in-house mediator or an external mediator).

The mediator will help you:

- Identify what has happened by speaking confidentially to all parties.
- Assess the best way to bring the parties together.
- Hold a joint meeting.
- Explore the issues.
- Build the agreement for future working relationships.

What shouldn't you do?

- Don't expect the mediator to solve the problems.
- Don't stick in the past.
- Don't try to apportion responsibility/blame.

Benefits

- It increases the likelihood of a resolution.
- It can improve working relationships.

Formal processes

Since 1 October 2004, all employers must have a minimum procedure for resolving grievances by law. The Guidance on the Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 2004 establishes the three-step procedure shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Statutory minimum three-step procedure for resolving disputes

Steps	Process
One	The employer must set down in writing the nature of the employee's conduct, capability or other circumstances that may result in dismissal or disciplinary action, and send a copy of this statement to the employee. The employer must inform the employee of the basis of his/her complaint.
Two	The employer must invite the employee to a hearing at a reasonable time and place where the issue can be discussed. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend. After the meeting, the employer must inform the employee about any decisions and offer the employee the right of appeal.
Three	If the employee wishes to appeal, he/she must inform the employer. The employer must invite the employee to attend a further hearing to appeal against the employer's decision, and the final decision must be communicated to the employee. Where possible, a more senior manager should attend the appeal hearing.

Formal processes

Appropriate when...

- The incident that brought about the complaint is considered very serious by the claimant.
- Informal routes have been unsuccessful.
- One or more employees concerned prefer the formal process.

Not appropriate when...

- The employees concerned prefer to work together to resolve the problem.
- The formal process may cause extreme distress to one or more employees.

What should be done and who should do it?

An employee who believes they have been bullied:

- Keep a diary recording negative behaviours.
- Gather the evidence to support the grievance.
- Set out your grievance in writing and send a copy to their line manager (or more senior manager if the line manager is involved in the bullying).
- Take part in the investigation process.
- Identify a supporter/colleague/union representative to accompany them through the formal procedures.

An employee accused of bullying:

- Read the content of the grievance.
- Recognise where there may be some truth in the grievance.
- Gather evidence in support of their actions/behaviours.
- Take part in the investigation process.
- Identify a supporter/colleague/union representative to accompany them through the formal process.

Formal processes Continued

The investigator:

- Maintain an open and impartial position with regard to the people interviewed.
- Ensure that the witnesses are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Report relevant facts avoiding emotional impressions and hearsay.
- Ensure that the interview reports are accurate and representative of the views of the witnesses (the witnesses should read and agree the final report before it is offered in evidence).
- Protect the confidentiality of the witnesses.

The organisation:

- Acknowledge the grievance letter.
- Inform the alleged bully of the nature of the grievance allegation against them.
- Set a date to hear the grievance hearing (within a reasonable period of time, normally less than a month).
- Organise the investigation of the grievance with interviews of the alleged bully, colleagues and other witnesses.
- Offer personal support or counselling for the alleged bully and victim(s) for at least the period of the formal process.
- Organise the hearing with a trained and competent manager.
- Examine the evidence and come to a decision on the outcome (ie complaint not validated, complaint validated – informal resolution recommended, complaint validated – recommendation for disciplinary action).
- Inform both parties of the outcome of the process and the right for appeal.
- Where appropriate, arrange an appeal (generally with a more senior manager).

- What shouldn't you do**
- Don't try to brush the grievance under the carpet.
 - Don't breach confidentiality.
 - Don't delay the process.

Benefits

- The formal procedure explores the grievance including the negative behaviours.
- The process includes the possibility of disciplinary action against the wrong-doer.

Employment tribunal

Appropriate when...

- The employee believes that the organisation's grievance processes were faulty.
- The employee disagrees with the outcome of the grievance procedures.
- Employment has been terminated.
- Putting a grievance in writing may result in a significant personal threat.

Not appropriate when...

- The organisation's processes have not been fully explored/employed.
- It is less than 28 days from the time the grievance letter was sent.
- The time limit for making applications has been exhausted (three months).

Formal processes Continued

What should be done and who should do it?

The employee:

- Make an application to the Employment Tribunal on form IT1 (obtainable from the Citizens Advice Bureaux, law centres or Jobcentres).
- Gather and disclose evidence.
- Identify witnesses.

The organisation:

- Respond to the application (accept or contest the claim).
- Gather and disclose evidence.
- Identify witnesses.

The tribunal:

- Arrange a tribunal date (giving at least 14 days' notice).
- Issue witness orders.
- Listen to the evidence.
- Make a decision on: the rights of the parties, recommendations for actions by the employer, the level of compensation for injury to feelings and losses arising from the treatment.
- Inform both parties of their right to appeal to the Employee Appeal Tribunal.

Benefits

- The employee can represent themselves.
- The employment tribunal panel are familiar with organisational practices.
- The procedure can be relatively inexpensive to the employee.
- The procedure is less formal than appearing in the county court.

Civil action

Appropriate when...

- The employee has suffered a personal injury as a result of the bullying.
- The organisation can be shown to have failed to protect the employee from bullying.

Not appropriate when...

- The organisation has behaved reasonably in dealing with organisational bullying and harassment.
- There is no personal injury.

What should be done and who should do it?

The employee:

- Contact a solicitor, particularly if the claim is for more than £5,000.
- Provide evidence of the personal injury.
- Demonstrate evidence of the organisation's failures.

The organisation:

- Take legal advice.
- Inform your insurance company.
- Disclose relevant documents.

Benefits

- Most cases will be settled out of court.
- The settlement will take account of the personal injury sustained.

Part 9 Supporting the employees involved

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'The system needs to be confidential and unbiased. The victim needs to be made aware of the outcomes of various options and be given adequate support. The perpetrator may also need the same treatment with the emphasis on resolution, rather than blame.'

Quote from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

Being involved in dealing with bullying can be difficult for all concerned. It's important that everyone receives an appropriate level of care and support, including both the bully and the victim.

Perceived bully

In the past, there has been little acknowledgement of the need to provide support for those accused of bullying during both informal and formal processes. Malicious or vindictive accusations of bullying are actually relatively rare. Bullies can be unaware of the impact of their behaviour and actions. To be accused of bullying can be a shock and it's important that the accused person is provided with the same level of care and support as the person doing the accusing. This would normally include the support of a colleague, time to prepare their evidence and the offer of counselling.

Perceived victim

The perceived victim of bullying is likely to have experienced the behaviours of the person they regard as a bully for some time before reporting this to their manager or organisation. Because of this, they often experience feelings of anxiety and distress. The perceived victim will need clear and realistic information and support.

One of the most important decisions for the victim is the decision to deal with the situation informally or formally. A bullying/harassment adviser can be very helpful in enabling the perceived victim to consider the benefits and disadvantages of the options open to them. The perceived victim will also benefit from being given the time to prepare their evidence and to talk about their feelings to a trained counsellor. Where there is a fear of further bullying while the situation is investigated, it may be necessary to give the perceived victim special leave until the situation is resolved.

Listener, buddy or supporter

It's helpful for everyone involved in a bullying investigation to have a personal supporter to talk to throughout the chosen approach to resolution. The listener, buddy or supporter needs to be aware of the organisational policies and procedures and to help the employee understand the choices that are open to them. However, this role can be exhausting and it's essential that the person providing information and support has access to their own confidential support. This may be a counsellor or mentor who understands the organisational processes and can help the supporter deal with the personal issues that are raised when dealing with victims of workplace bullying.

Mediator/counsellor

Unlike the listener or supporter who deals with the process of dealing with workplace bullying, the mediator and counsellor will be exposed to some of the more complex emotional responses of those involved in the bullying situation. This can raise personal issues which can lead to burnout and secondary trauma. It's crucial that mediators and counsellors attend regular supervision sessions with a qualified personal supervisor with an in-depth understanding of the psychology of bullying and the needs of counsellors and mediators in preventing secondary trauma or compassion fatigue.

HR practitioner/investigator

These roles can be difficult and exhausting. It's important that anyone involved in dealing with a bullying case has appropriate training and support from their line manager or supervisor. When the case is a particularly difficult one, it may also be necessary to provide personal counselling or support.

Part 10 Psychological help for victims and bullies

What's the major challenge facing your organisation in tackling bullying?

- 'Providing independent support to both accuser and accused. Often the focus can be on one or the other rather than both.'

Quote from the 1,190 respondents to the CIPD (2004) *Managing Conflict at Work* survey

The victim of bullying

Victims of bullying, particularly when they have been bullied for a long time before seeking help, may suffer a range of psychological difficulties and disorders. The most common symptoms are anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress.

Although many counsellors use a single theoretical counselling model in their counselling, when dealing with bullying it's helpful to be able to integrate a number of counselling models and interventions.

In most cases, the first intervention will be a psychological debrief of the bullying incidents.

Debriefing

The debriefing starts at a time when things were normal, providing a description of the employee's working life, relationships and behaviours without the bullying. The employee is helped to give a factual account of the bullying experience with a particular emphasis on identifying the full range of sensory experiences that may have become associated with the bullying behaviour. This stage is important as sensory impressions such as a particular smell, sound or image can develop the power to trigger the experience of the bullying again.

During the second telling of the story, the employee is encouraged to recall any thoughts that occurred at the time of the bullying experience. The counsellor will note any irrational thinking present at the time of the bullying. The third telling of the story examines the

emotional responses to the facts and thoughts that have been identified in the earlier telling of the story.

By the end of the debrief, the counsellor should be aware of the sensory triggers that are likely to cause a re-experience of the bullying, together with any irrational thinking that may delay recovery.

Narrative therapy

Narrative approaches to supporting victims of bullying are effective for most people. Narrative therapy is relatively new, having emerged from the work done by family therapists.

The story, gradually built up in the psychological debriefing, can be a helpful starting point for the narrative approach. Understanding the bullying story in the debriefing can help the employee to become aware of their tendencies to create self-destructive stories about their experience rather than a story that helps them grow and accept themselves.

Narrative therapy gives the employee the possibility of looking at all their life stories. Some stories may have become more dominant than others. Some of the stories will be helpful and others may have a negative influence. Where the life stories are not helpful, narrative therapy provides the person with an opportunity to 'deconstruct' the story and then create new stories. It's this 'reconstructing' of adaptive stories that allows the employee to learn something new about themselves, and to understand the real meaning of the bullying experience.

Cognitive behavioural therapy

Many of the problems faced by victims of bullying are caused by the way they think about themselves and what has happened to them. Cognitive behavioural therapy is based on the idea that the more rational and realistic a person's thoughts are, the less troubled they will be by the things that happen to them. During debriefing, people are often found to be irrational in their thinking. Some of the common irrational thoughts of victims of bullying are:

- I must have done something wrong for this to happen to me.
- Someone should have done something to stop it happening.
- Everyone hates me.
- I'll never get over this.

These thoughts can be challenged using cognitive behavioural techniques. The cognitive behavioural process encourages the employee to see each of the irrational beliefs as a hypothesis rather than a fact. This allows the employee to begin to test their irrational beliefs against reality.

Irrational beliefs can lead to negative behaviours. For example, where an employee has an irrational belief that everyone hates them, their behaviour may become aggressive to other people. This in turn can bring about a situation in which people are less friendly, reinforcing the employee's original view.

An important benefit of using cognitive behavioural therapy is that it encourages the employee to view the improvements in their well-being as being down to their increased knowledge and skill rather than the counsellor's endeavours.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is central to the process of dealing with interpersonal conflict and bullying in the workplace. For some employees the relationships will have broken down to such an extent that the employee prefers to find alternative employment rather than take the risk of becoming a victim of the bully for a second time. In these circumstances, the focus of the counselling will be to help such an employee build up self-esteem and confidence and to prepare themselves for alternative employment.

If the employee decides to stay in the organisation, the process of rehabilitation should involve a number of people. It's sometimes helpful for the counsellor to facilitate a rehabilitation meeting where the employee, line manager and an HR professional can talk about the best way to support the return to work. An important part of the rehabilitation process is the assurance that everyone shares the same expectations of the way people behave towards each other.

The bully

The most appropriate way to deal with employees who have behaved in an inappropriate or aggressive way is to adopt a behavioural modification approach to their behaviour. The approach requires the organisation to agree to monitor the employee's behaviours.

The behavioural change programme will help the employee to:

- recognise and accept their part in the development of the inappropriate behaviour
- identify any underlying causes for their bullying or harassing behaviour
- learn how to behave in a way that respects and values others.

The programme will involve four main stages: assessment, counselling/coaching, group work and rehabilitation.

Individual assessment

During the assessment, the employee will go through a structured interview designed to gather information on the personal and situational factors involved in the bullying behaviours. In addition, there will be a number of psychological tests to identify personal and motivational styles of behaviour.

Following the individual assessment, an organisational report should be prepared to provide the organisation with information on the suitability of the employee for a behavioural modification programme. If the behaviour is due to a personality disorder, it's unlikely that a simple behavioural modification programme will be adequate to address the behaviour.

Counselling and coaching

Most employees will require a period of individual counselling or coaching. Work of this nature requires the counsellor to move between these two different ways of working as and when the situation requires a different approach. For example, if the assessment has indicated that the employee had been the victim of childhood abuse, counselling would tend to be the preferred intervention. However, if the employee lacked certain social skills, a more interactive social-skills training or coaching approach would be appropriate.

Group work and group training

Following the individual work, group work may be used to consolidate the learning and to help the employee demonstrate their new interpersonal skills in a group environment. The group will work towards building a new realisation of what it is like to build a culture of respect within their teams and with colleagues.

Rehabilitation

In certain situations, it may be appropriate to provide additional support to the employee by helping in the development of a rehabilitation programme. This may be supported by occupational health or an employee assistance programme.

Conclusions

Tackling a difficult and complex issue like bullying at work is about much more than having a policy in the staff handbook. It's not just about an absence of negatives, but about actively defining and promoting positive working relationships.

The focus needs to be moved from the destructive stance of punishing and isolating bullies to a more explicit presentation of positive options. Building a culture of dignity and respect at work means creating a workplace where appropriate ways of behaving are clearly communicated, promoted and supported. It also means individuals being supported in accepting responsibility for their behaviour and actions, and working towards solutions when problems occur.

Line managers play a vital role in nipping bad behaviour and bullying in the bud before they escalate and formal procedures begin. Often HR only gets involved when relationships have already irrevocably broken down.

There need to be different ways to encourage victims to feel confident about coming forward, for example, having a buddy or listener to go to, or having access to mediation. Training is needed at every level of an organisation so no one is seen to be 'above' behaving like a bully and people see difficult issues being dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently.

Changing entrenched behaviours which have always been seen as acceptable isn't ever going to be easy, but it can't be ignored when the bullying has to stop.

Feedback

The CIPD's Professional Knowledge and Information Department works to turn research into practical, accessible guidance for those involved in the management and development of people. If you'd like to give us your feedback on this Guide, please email research@cipd.co.uk

Useful contacts

Bullying

Andrea Adams Trust
Tel: 01273 704 900
Website: www.andreaadamstrust.org

Bully on Line
Website: www.bullyonline.org

Workplace Bullying
Website: www.workplacebullying.co.uk

Disabilities

Disability on the Agenda
Website: www.disability.gov.uk

Disability Rights Commission
Tel: 08457 622 633
Website: www.drc-gb.org
Email: enquiries@drc-gb.org

Gender issues

Equal Opportunities Commission
Website: www.eoc.org.uk

Lesbian and Gay Switchboard
Tel: 020 7837 7324
Website: www.switchboard.org.uk

Race

Commission for Racial Equality
Tel: 020 7939 0000
Website: www.cre.gov.uk

Mental health

Samaritans
Tel: 08457 909 090
Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation
Tel: 020 7803 1100
Email: mhf@mhf.org.uk

Mind Out for Mental Health
Tel: 020 7403 2230
Email: info@mindout.net

Professional bodies

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
Tel: 0870 443 5252
Website: www.bacp.co.uk

British Psychological Society
Tel: 0116 254 9568
Website: www.bps.org.uk

Faculty of Occupational Medicine
Tel: 020 7317 5890
Website: www.facocmed.ac.uk

Society of Occupational Medicine
Tel 020 7486 2641
Website www.som.org.uk

Mediation

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)
(also advises on bullying and provides training)
Tel: 08457 474747
Website: www.acas.org.uk

Making a claim in the county court

County Courts Advice Service
Website: www.courtservice.gov.uk

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