

Are You Being Bullied at Work? Expert Reveals Common Signs and How to Handle it

2 months ago



Workplace bullying is a real concern, with the CIPD reporting that 25% of employees experienced conflict or abuse in 2024.

Bullying can take many forms ranging from insidious harmful comments that are hard to call out to more overt instances of physical or verbal abuse. Irrespective of the form that it takes, proactive steps should be taken to ensure that workplace bullying is not allowed to thrive in your environment.

Here, the experts at leading [workplace safety training](#) providers High Speed Training share what constitutes workplace bullying, and tips on how to best handle any incidents.

What is Workplace Bullying?

Dr Richard Anderson, Director of Learning, at [High Speed Training](#), said: “UNISON defines workplace bullying as persistent offensive, intimidating, humiliating behaviour, which attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees. Bullying can take many forms and can occur in a wide range of situations which can make it hard to identify. However, bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed before it continues to undermine an employee’s right to be treated with dignity and respect.”

The terms bullying and harassment are often used interchangeably however there is a difference between the two. Harassment typically refers to unwanted conduct that seeks to humiliate or undermine an individual group. However, unlike bullying, harassment is caused by prejudice against specific groups and/or protected characteristics. The Equality Act 2010 established nine protected characteristics and if someone is subjected to abuse because of a protected characteristic then that is classed as harassment.

Most discriminatory behaviour is illegal in the UK and so there is specific legal action that can be taken in the case of harassment.

Signs of Bullying at Work

Dr Anderson said: “Whilst it can be hard to identify bullying, it’s important that you are aware of the signs so that you know when to take action. Common signs of workplace bullying can include constant criticism, threats, aggression and shouting, removal of duties without reason, overbearing supervision monitoring or being excluded and having reasonable requests refused.

“It could also take the form of being put down or mocked, or more seriously, having malicious rumours spread about you, or unwelcome sexual or inappropriate advances. Bullying can be incredibly damaging to one’s mental and physical health and, if left unchecked it can create a toxic work environment in which employees do not feel safe and supported. It is therefore vital that bullying is tackled immediately and that all signs of bullying are treated seriously.”

There are several ways in which bullying can be tackled in the workplace. These include:

Creating a positive environment – Whilst this won’t necessarily stop instances of bullying, it will create an environment in which bullying behaviour is not tolerated, and becomes easier to spot and report.

Encouraging clear communication – This can embolden staff to speak up about what they may be experiencing and also to speak up for one another.

Documenting what you see – Discreetly recording details of bullying behaviour as they occur provides you with proof which can be presented to HR in order to tackle the situation.

Reporting the behaviour – Reporting bullying behaviour holds the bully accountable and ensures that the company addresses the issue in the best way.

How to Report Bullying at Work

If you are experiencing any bullying behaviour, it’s important that you speak up. The first action you can take, if you feel comfortable to do so, is to speak directly to the person who is behaving in this way. It may be that they do not realise what they are doing, or how their behaviour is affecting you. Be clear with how you feel and try to stay calm.

If you do not want to do this, or if you have already done so and the behaviour has continued, you could report it to your line manager, HR department or your trade union representative if applicable. If none of the above are suitable for your circumstances, you could make a formal complaint using your organisation’s grievance procedure. In addition, if you need any further help or advice, you could contact Acas, an independent public body that provides advice on dealing with workplace conflict.

For more information, please visit www.highspeedtraining.co.uk.