

BULLYING AT WORK

In the workplace, bullying is a form of abusive behaviour where an individual or a group of people, create an intimidating or humiliating work environment for another. This is with the purpose of harming their dignity, safety and well-being or employment status. This can make those subjected to it anxious, depressed and it might affect their family life. Bullying can include:-

- Damaging someone's professional reputation or relationships.
- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Breaking confidence, embarrassing someone in public
- Excluding from social events on a regular basis
- Spreading rumours about someone and trying to get others to join in
- Trying to get others to avoid having contact with the victim.
- Comments on social networking sites that could be derogatory

Bullying is not:

- Differences of opinion. If you are being systematically belittled, excluded, or intimidated, you are not just clashing with someone, this is bullying.
- Character building. Derogatory remarks and actions will not build character; the effects can be destructive and can affect your mental health, ability to perform a job and affect your family relationships.
- A Management Style. Aggressive or dominant managers may try and pass bullying off as their management style.
- Provoked. Bullying is never the victim's fault and will be motivated by the perpetrator's insecurities, prejudices and/or career ambitions.

It is important to remember that if you are being bullied, all incidents are relevant, because they establish a pattern.

NEXT STEPS

If you are being bullied, then talk to someone you trust - another colleague, friend or family member. This can be a huge relief, as you'll realise you are not alone going through this process, and will have support dealing with the problem.

If you care for someone who is being bullied at work, or someone has told you they are being bullied, please encourage them to follow these steps.

1. **Keep notes.** Include what was said, the date, time, place, what happened, names of everyone who was there. Get these notes down as soon as you can. Keep notes of each occasion.

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2. **Talk to the person:** if you feel you can, find a quiet moment and start with an informal conversation with the person, if that feels safe. Let them know you are not comfortable with their behaviour. They need to know that their behaviour affects you and that you will act if it doesn't change. Some people are genuinely unaware that their bullying behaviour IS bullying. So let them know, they may be mortified.
3. **Talk to management and HR:** if you aren't able to have the conversation, or if you have the conversation but it doesn't go well and the bullying continues, tell your manager and HR about the problem. If the person bullying you is your manager, speak to their manager instead. Your organisation should have a policy to guide you through procedure for complaints like this.

When HR deals with your complaint, they will ask you and other people questions about your experiences, which is where your notes will be needed.

4. **Know your organisation's policies:** find out your organisation's policies on bullying so you can make sure that the policies are followed and the situation is properly dealt with.
5. **Make a complaint:** If things still aren't changing make an official complaint through your organisation's Grievance Procedure. Information on how to do this should be available in your organisation's handbook or intranet.
6. **Take legal action:** if after these steps the problem is still not resolved, you can take legal action at an employment tribunal. Your employer should by law protect you from abusive behaviour at work. Legal action is usually taken in cases of harassment.

YOUR RIGHTS

If a colleague or manager discriminates against you because of your stammer, or shows aggressive or intimidating behaviour, this could be harassment. This is illegal under the [Equality Act 2010](#). You can find out here how to [prepare for an employment tribunal](#).

AFTERWARDS

It can take time to build your confidence back up and for you to feel comfortable around people.

If the bullying has affected your mental health, then talk to your GP. You may need time off work, and a therapist may help you get through this. Many adults experience anxiety or stress at work, and it is normal to ask for professional help to deal with experiences of bullying and to recover fully.

Finally, if you are coming to terms with your experience or supporting someone else who has experienced bullying because of their stammer, have patience. It can take time for someone to be able to process what they've gone through and recover their confidence.