

Inappropriate Behaviour Checklist

Summary checklist

What is inappropriate behaviour?

Harassment is unwanted inappropriate behaviour that offends a person's dignity. It can be related to sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age or any other personal characteristic.¹

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.²

Types of bullying or harassment

Note that this list is by no means exhaustive and that one type of bullying and harassment will often overlap into another.

Verbal bullying and harassment includes:

- shouting
- threatening
- name calling
- embarrassing and humiliating
- using offensive language (e.g. racist or sexist)
- making disparaging or personal remarks
- telling offensive jokes
- constantly interrupting and talking over.

Non-Verbal bullying and harassment includes:

- using aggressive and intimidating gestures or body language
- mimicking
- giving someone the cold shoulder (e.g. ignoring and disregarding; communicating only by email or through a third-party)
- showing offensive pictures.

Physical bullying and harassment includes: pushing, hitting, touching, standing too close and throwing things.

¹ A legally accurate definition of harassment is 'conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them'.

² ACAS definition: www.acas.org.uk

How widespread is bullying?

Studies suggest that **one in four people have been bullied** at work and that one third to a half of all stress related illnesses are caused by workplace bullying.³

What legislation provides protection?

Discrimination legislation protects people in employment from suffering 'less favourable treatment'.

The legislation also protects people from harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic that violates their dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the recipient.

The Equality Act 2010 protects all 'protected characteristics' against direct and indirect discrimination.

What are the effects?

For the individual, inappropriate behaviour can result in:

- anxiety
- illness
- loss of self-esteem
- drop in performance.

For the organisation, harmful effects may include:

- lower morale
- break down of working relationships
- deterioration of performance
- increase in risk of legal claims.

Who is responsible?

We are all responsible for the human aspects of the working environment. The way we behave affects **everyone** around us. Organisations have a duty of care to their employees. This is likely to include taking steps aimed at preventing staff from behaving in an inappropriate way. An environment in which inappropriate behaviour is tolerated can have an adverse impact on employees' mental and physical health.

³ University of Manchester, 2000