

Bullying & Harassment Policy

Policy · UK · Updated 2026-07-23 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A bullying and harassment policy defines the behaviour an employer will not tolerate at work, gives targets and witnesses clear routes to raise it, and sets out how complaints are investigated and resolved. It covers conduct between colleagues at every level — including managers — wherever work happens: on site, offsite, at work socials, and online.

The behaviours this policy addresses thrive on silence and ambiguity. Most people who experience bullying at work never formally report it. A policy that names the behaviour plainly, offers an informal route as well as a formal one, and visibly protects the people who speak up changes that calculation.

This template covers definitions and concrete examples, responsibilities, informal and formal routes, how investigations run, and how both parties are treated during and after a complaint.

Purpose and scope

This policy applies to everyone working for [Your company] — employees, workers, agency staff, and contractors — and to behaviour towards colleagues in any setting connected to work: the workplace, client sites, travel, work socials, and online channels including group chats.

It also covers harassment of our staff by third parties such as customers and suppliers: report it under this policy and [name/role] will act, which may include warning or barring the third party.

Policy statement

[Your company] is committed to a workplace where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated in any form, from anyone, at any level — seniority protects nobody under this policy. Every complaint is taken seriously, handled as confidentially as a fair process allows, and nobody suffers a detriment for raising a genuine concern or supporting someone else's.

Definitions

- **Bullying:** offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour, or a misuse of power, that undermines, humiliates, or injures the person on the receiving end. It can be a pattern or a single serious incident.
- **Harassment:** unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment — the definition used by the Equality Act 2010.
- **Sexual harassment:** unwanted conduct of a sexual nature with that same purpose or effect.
- **Victimisation:** treating someone badly because they made, supported, or gave evidence about a complaint.
- **Not bullying:** reasonable management action carried out fairly — honest performance feedback, reasonable instructions, and legitimate management of conduct or absence.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour

- Shouting at, ridiculing, or humiliating someone, especially in front of others.
- Spreading malicious rumours or deliberately excluding someone from meetings, communication, or social events.
- Offensive jokes or "banter" about age, disability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.
- Unwanted physical contact, sexual comments, propositions, or the display or sharing of sexual material.
- Misusing seniority: setting someone up to fail, unreasonably removing responsibilities, or making threats connected to complaints.
- Pile-ons, mockery, or exclusion in group chats or on social media — online behaviour is covered exactly as offline behaviour.

Responsibilities

- [Name/role] owns this policy, ensures complaints are resourced and handled properly, and reports themes to [owner/board].
- Managers set the standard, act on what they see and hear without waiting for a formal complaint, and never dismiss concerns as personality clashes.
- Everyone treats colleagues with respect, and challenges or reports behaviour that falls short — bystanders who speak up are protected by this policy too.

Raising a concern

1. If you feel safe and comfortable doing so, tell the person their behaviour is unwelcome and ask them to stop — sometimes this resolves it. This step is entirely optional.
2. Otherwise, or if it continues, speak informally to your manager or to [named contact]; they can advise, speak to the person, or arrange mediation with your agreement.
3. To raise the matter formally, put your complaint in writing to [name/role] — or, if it concerns them, to [alternative name/role] — describing what happened, when, and any witnesses.
4. Formal complaints are handled under the grievance procedure, with the adaptations in this policy, including the right to be accompanied at any meeting.
5. Support is available to you throughout from [named contact/EAP details], whether or not you raise a formal complaint.

Investigation and outcomes

Formal complaints are investigated promptly and confidentially by someone impartial — [name/role, or an external investigator for senior or complex cases]. Both parties are heard, witnesses are interviewed, and interim measures such as adjusting duties or separating the parties may be used; these are protective, not punitive, and are not applied in a way that disadvantages the complainant.

Where a complaint is upheld, action follows under the disciplinary policy — serious harassment is gross misconduct — alongside any wider fixes such as training or supervision changes. Where a complaint made in good faith is not upheld, no action is taken against the complainant and working arrangements are rebuilt with support for both parties. Deliberately false or malicious complaints are dealt with under the disciplinary policy.

Training, records, and review

This policy is covered at induction and in refresher training every [period]; managers receive additional training on spotting problems early and handling complaints. Complaint records are stored confidentially in [system/location], separate from general personnel files, in line with our data retention policy.

[Name/role] reviews anonymised complaint themes [frequency] and this policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] — including our preventive steps against sexual harassment. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Name at least two people who can receive complaints, at different levels, so nobody has to complain to the person the complaint is about.
2. Rewrite the examples section with the behaviours most likely in your setting — a kitchen, a ward, and a site cabin have different failure modes.
3. Decide now who investigates complaints about the most senior person, even if that answer is an external HR adviser, and write it in.
4. Run the training as discussion of borderline scenarios, not a slide deck — the grey areas are where behaviour actually changes.
5. Record the preventive steps you take against sexual harassment — training dates, risk conversations, policy reviews — as evidence of the proactive duty.

Official guidance

- › [ACAS — Grievance procedure: step by step](#)
- › [HSE — Work-related stress](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/bullying-harassment-policy> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.