

It's Time...

# TO TACKLE BULLYING



We all have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity at work and to be in an environment where we can feel respected, valued, and make the most of our hard work and talents. Unfortunately, many PDA members report that they face bullying and harassment in the workplace.

## Tackling bullying in your workplace

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable behaviours. The PDA has a zero-tolerance approach, and our Service Centre team and Workplace Reps will help members to tackle these issues in their workplace or employer.

Research demonstrates that bullying and harassment contributes to increased levels of stress, poor health and low morale amongst employees. It also impacts on employee productivity and attendance at work.

The PDA is committed to supporting members, and all pharmacists, to create change and to improve their working lives.

## How is bullying defined?

Bullying in the workplace can either be a one-off incident, or a persistent pattern of offensive, intimidating, humiliating behaviour which attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees.

There is no definitive list of bullying behaviours, but these can include either in person or online:

- Being consistently criticised, having responsibilities removed or being given trivial tasks to do
- Being shouted at
- Being persistently picked on in front of others or in private, including being the focus of jokes
- Consistently criticising a member of staff in terms of their professional or personal standing
- Purposefully overloading an employee with work or setting impossible deadlines
- Regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding individuals from discussions or activities
- Spreading malicious rumours or disclosing private or embarrassing information.

Although there is no specific law which addresses workplace bullying, employers have a legal duty of care towards employees and so must protect their employees in the workplace and whilst the employees are carrying out work for the employer. An employer who fails to protect their employees in this way will be failing in their duty of care. ACAS recommends that employers keep up to date with technology and review their policies on bullying and harassment accordingly.

PDA Rep Networks are best placed to work with employers to ensure that policies and procedures are fit for purpose.

## Cyber Bullying

As technology has developed in the workplace there has been an increase in cyber bullying and abuse.

Cyber bullying is defined as:

*"Any use of information and communications technology to support deliberate and hostile attempts to hurt, upset or embarrass another person."*

Examples of cyber bullying include:

- Offensive or threatening emails – this includes emails with an implied threat
- Managers treating staff differently in the volume of emails and tasks
- Defamatory information online, in group emails or on blogs and social media
- Similar approach by WhatsApp, SMS or text messaging on mobile phones
- Posting confidential information about an employee online.

Members who experience cyber bullying report the same feelings of fear, intimidation, stress and low morale as those bullied face-to-face. However, cyber bullying has been found to result in higher mental strain and lower job satisfaction than 'conventional' bullying. There are often no witnesses to incidents, and it is more likely to happen outside of normal working hours.

## Harassment

Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as:

*"Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual."*

Bullying could be a form of harassment; however, it is not possible to make a direct complaint to an employment tribunal about bullying on its own. A claim can be pursued in the employment tribunals where the bullying amounts to harassment due to a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation).

For the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, harassment arises when the actions of the employer violates the employee's dignity, or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Furthermore, an employee can pursue a claim for detriment where the bullying arises from a protected disclosure made by the employee, commonly referred to as 'whistleblowing'.

## Students and trainees

Students on placements and trainees can face bullying and harassment in the workplace, but you should not feel alone. Your PDA Rep or the PDA Service Centre can give you advice and guidance.

It is important that you do not work beyond your competency, even if you are being pressured to do so. You should take advice from the PDA if you face such pressures at work.

PDA membership is free for all students and trainees.

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## The Research

A survey carried out by the NHS on bullying and harassment in 2020 found that 19% of staff experienced bullying or harassment from colleagues, 13% from their manager, and 98% experienced incivility in their workplace. Bullying behaviour disproportionately impacts BAME, disabled and LGBT+ staff who experience higher levels of bullying and harassment in the NHS.

The impacts of bullying on the individual include anxiety and depression, disengagement, as well as reduced confidence. It has been reported that staff who notice bullying behaviour in the NHS had a 20% decrease in their performance and a 50% decrease in wanting to help others, resulting in negative impacts for the organisation such as lower levels of productivity, greater risk of human error and reduced teamwork.

The GPhC standards outline that pharmacy professionals must 'work in partnership with others', 'behave in a professional manner' and 'speak up when they have concerns or when things go wrong'. Leadership is another value outlined in the GPhC standards, which includes pharmacy professionals 'taking responsibility for their actions and leading by example' and 'contributing to the education, training and development of the team or of others.'

## Steps to follow if you are being bullied in the workplace

- Keep a contemporaneous record of bullying, cyber bullying or potential harassment using the PDA's bullying and harassment incident diary
- Keep copies of relevant emails, social media, videos and documents that support your case
- Find out what policies your employer has on bullying in the workplace
- If there is no rep in your workplace, please contact the PDA directly.

Please also consider contacting [Pharmacist Support](#), who have a free confidential helpline and resources. If you are living in Northern Ireland, contact the Pharmacists' Support and Advice Service, [PASS](#).

If you are not yet a member of the PDA and would like support, join the PDA [here](#).

If you do not have a rep in your workplace, then you may wish to become one. Learn more about becoming a PDA Rep [here](#).

You can contact the PDA team by calling the Service Centre on 0121 694 7000 or by emailing us at: [enquiries@the-pda.org](mailto:enquiries@the-pda.org).

**This guide offers a general overview of your rights but should not be taken as legal advice. Bullying and harassment cases can be complex, and every case is different. Contact the PDA for further detailed information.**

## Learn more

[PDA Reps Networks](#): PDA Reps Network in Boots, PDA Reps Network in Lloyds, PDA Reps Network in Northern Ireland Federations

Legalities - including the Malicious Communications Act 1998. It is an offence to send an indecent, offensive, or threatening letter, electronic communication or article to another person. Under section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984, it is an offence to send a telephone message that is indecent, offensive, or threatening.

[NHS, Bullying at work](#), How to identify if you're being bullied at work, how to stop it, and advice on getting support.

[NHS Staff Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partnership Group Infographic based on the NHS Staff Survey, 2019](#)

[Pharmacist Support](#), an independent, trusted charity, providing a wide variety of support services to pharmacists and their families, former pharmacists and pharmacy students.

[PASS](#), Pharmacists' Support and Advice Service for Northern Ireland.

[PDA Discrimination in the workplace booklet](#)

## Get involved

If you are not yet a member of the PDA and would like support, join the PDA [here](#).

If you would like to be more involved in the work of the PDA, find out more about becoming a PDA Workplace Rep [here](#).

The PDA has four Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Networks; the National Association of Women Pharmacists (NAWP), the BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) Pharmacists' Network, the Ability (Disabled Pharmacists') Network and the LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Pharmacists' Network. For more information, visit [here](#).

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