

## Bullying in the headlines

Employees who have been considering contacting a bullying helpline may be less keen to do so given the publicity the National Bullying Helpline has given to the anonymous Number 10 workers and their complaints.

However, the current furore over allegations of bullying at Number 10 should act as a reminder to employers of the dangers of bullying in the workplace. Most employers are aware of the need to have in place equality and diversity policies but how many have bullying and harassment policies? Bullying can be related to personal characteristics covered by discrimination legislation but need not necessarily be, and for that reason separate bullying and harassment policies are necessary. Training your workforce in the appropriate way to identify bullying problems and deal with them is also essential.

Bullying can flourish in a working culture where communication is poor. It causes distress and anxiety and has an inevitable impact on a person's ability to work. Many of the cases of absence through stress can be related to bullying. The potential financial impact on the employer would include the impact on productivity and even constructive unfair dismissal claims.



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