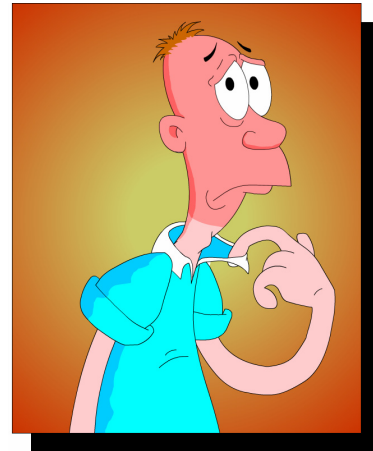


Beat the Bullies

The document is entitled 'Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work'. The Code, drawn up by the Health and Safety Authority, was launched by the Minister for Labour Affairs Tony Killeen TD. The Code notes the provision in the Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005 requiring employers to manage work activities to prevent improper conduct or behaviour at work. Among the features of the Code is the setting out of the responsibilities of both employers' and employees' in preventing bullying.

For the purposes of the Code of Practice, bullying at work is defined as follows: *"...repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but is not considered to be bullying"*.

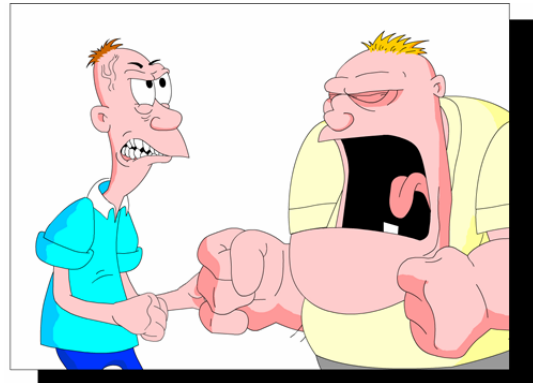
The Code requires all employees and employers to be vigilant of their own behaviours in order to eradicate bullying, and promotes a systemic and robust method for dealing with cases of bullying as the best way to prevent the behaviour being repeated and reduce the health effects for those who have been bullied. The code also provides guidance on identifying bullying and gives advice on how to prepare a bullying policy in the workplace. What this Code of Practice does is provide both employer and employee with the means and the machinery to identify and stamp out bullying in the workplace in a way which benefits all sides.



Research shows that prompt organisational responses are the best way to reduce the negative effects of bullying and with this in mind, the new Code of Practice will give a clearer guide for all concerned on the best way to react to a bullying complaint i.e. initially informally, using mediation and problem solving approaches and where this is not effective, applying a formal approach and independent, transparent investigation. "The new Code provides that, in the first instance, complaints of workplace bullying should be resolved in the workplace", according to Minister Killeen.

This code of practice was initiated following a report issued by the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying in April 2001. The Task Force commissioned a survey on workplace bullying from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The survey, based on 5,252 successfully completed questionnaires, found that 7% of respondents had been bullied at work in the last six months. Significantly, the female rate of 9.5% was higher than the male rate of 5.3%. In relation to age, workers in the 26-45 age group were slightly more likely to experience bullying than those in the 46 plus age bracket. There was no substantial variation by social class, though incidences of bullying were higher amongst workers with higher educational qualifications.

In terms of sectoral spread, bullying was most evident in public administration and defence (reported by 14% of respondents), education (12%), and health/social work (10%). It was lower in construction (3.4%), retail/wholesale (5.3%), and transport/communications (5.4%). It was discovered that bullying was more prevalent in larger (10%) rather than smaller workplaces (3.2%).



By far the most common form of bullying was verbal abuse and insults (81% of cases reported), while exclusion was cited in 35% of cases. Sexual harassment was cited in 3.3% of cases, while physical abuse was cited in 1.8% of cases. The perpetrators of bullying were most likely to be a supervisor or manager (45%), with the next largest category being a colleague (42%). The vast majority of male victims (82%) reported being bullied by other males, while 55% of females were reportedly bullied by other females, 41% were bullied by males, and 4% were bullied by both sexes.

The most common response to bullying was to discuss it with family and friends, which about two-thirds of victims reported. Furthermore, about 50% of people reporting bullying discussed it with a manager or supervisor, 15% with a trade union, and 13% approached the employer's personnel department. In terms of the effects of bullying, about half of those bullied reported an effect on their life outside work, while 54% considered leaving their jobs, and 11% did leave.

The Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work' can be downloaded free of charge from the HSA website:

<http://publications.hsa.ie/index.asp?docID=222>