

# Safety and Support

## Bullying & Harassment

### What does it mean?

**Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of:

- violating someone else's dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone else.

Harassment can occur where someone perceives another person to have a protected characteristic, for example a perception that someone is transgender even if they are not.

Harassment can also arise by association, where someone is harassed because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic, for example having a family member of a particular religion.

### Examples of harassment

Harassment can occur in many forms, and can take place either at work, outside work, in person, or online. While this is not an exhaustive list, examples include:

- "banter", jokes, taunts, or insults that are sexist, racist, ageist, transphobic, homophobic, or derogatory against any other protected characteristic;
- unwanted physical behaviour, for example, pushing or grabbing;
- excluding someone from a conversation or a social event or marginalising them from the group;
- derogatory comments about pregnancy, maternity leave, or IVF treatment;
- mimicking or making fun of someone's disability;
- derogatory or offensive comments about religion;
- unwelcome comments about someone's appearance or the way they dress that is related to a protected characteristic;

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- "outing" (i.e. revealing their sexual orientation against their wishes), or threatening to "out", someone;
- consistently using the wrong names and pronouns following the transition of a person's gender identity;
- displaying images that are racially offensive; and
- excluding or making derogatory comments about someone because of a perceived protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.

There is no legal definition of **bullying**. However, the Group regard it as conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or an abuse or

- misuse of power, and usually persistent, that has the effect of undermining, humiliating, or injuring the recipient.
- Bullying can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online (cyber-bullying) or on social media, including messaging services such as WhatsApp. Bullying may occur at work or outside work.
- If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful (see Harassment).

## Examples of bullying

While this is not an exhaustive list, bullying may include:

- physical, verbal, or psychological threats;
- excessive levels of supervision; and
- inappropriate and derogatory remarks about a person's performance.

It is important to understand that legitimate, reasonable, and constructive criticism of a person's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to people in the course of their employment, will not of themselves amount to bullying.

## Microaggressions

Microaggressions - sometimes called micro-incivilities - are statements, actions, or incidents that are regarded as indirect, subtle, or unintentional

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discrimination against members of a marginalised group such as a racial or ethnic minority. They are sometimes referred to as "death by a thousand cuts". Microaggressions generally take one of three forms:

**Micro-assaults:** Conscious and obvious insults made verbally or non-verbally to a marginalised individual or group, for example directing limp-wristed hand gestures towards a gay colleague and saying, "It's just a joke".

**Micro-insults:** Unintentionally insensitive remarks or assumptions based on stereotypes, for example saying to a person with a disability "You don't look disabled to me".

**Micro-invalidations:** Where a person denies, or seeks to cancel, the feelings and lived experiences of a marginalised individual or group, for example a white person saying, "I don't think the UK has a problem with racism - some people are just too sensitive".

Serious microaggressions can amount to unlawful harassment, bullying or discrimination but even less serious microaggressions can negatively impact the health and wellbeing of the person experiencing them.

## What support is available?

The Group understands that anyone affected by, or involved with, a complaint of bullying or any form of harassment may feel anxious or upset and we will do what we can to support employees.

### Talk to our EAP service (employees only)

For emotional support, employees can access free, confidential counselling from our EAP. To access the EAP website, go to <https://myaccount.westfieldhealth.com/>, with your username and password or contact EAP directly on 0145 525 5123.

### Talk to a mental health first aider (employees only)

Contact [hr@e-q-s.com](mailto:hr@e-q-s.com)

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## External Support Resources

### Help with bullying or harassment

- [National Bullying Helpline](#)
- [Shout](#)

### If you're struggling to cope and need someone to talk to, you can contact:

- [Samaritans](#)
- [LGBT Foundation](#)

### Mental health support or you are feeling suicidal

If you're worried you might harm yourself or others, **then please dial 999** or go directly to the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department of your local hospital to get urgent help.