

## RESPONDING TO WORKPLACE BULLYING

Use these tips to follow best practice when dealing with a complaint of workplace bullying or harassment

### Take all complaints seriously

Investigate the merits and facts of every report of workplace bullying or harassment. Ensure the people (internal or external) who deal with the complaint are trained to do a fair and thorough investigation.

### Proceed quickly but thoroughly

Reports should be dealt with quickly and within established timelines set out in your bullying and harassment policies. Remember that employees have a right to know the full allegations made against them and the opportunity to give reasons and explanations for their behaviour. Listen and gather information in an unbiased, empathetic and respectful way.

### Ignore individual reputations

Impartiality towards everyone involved is critical during the process. Where possible, the person in charge of the investigation or resolution process should not have a close working relationship with any parties to the complaint, including witnesses. This will help avoid any personal or professional bias.

### Don't blame the complainant

It's important to ensure that anyone who raises an issue of bullying isn't victimised for doing so. Treat them with sensitivity, respect and courtesy, and avoid any suggestion they are over-reacting to the situation before a full investigation is complete.

**Provide support to all** All parties involved in the investigation, including witnesses, should be offered access to support such as employee assistance programmes or peer support. Anyone involved is also entitled to have a support person present at interviews or meetings.

### Follow policy and procedure

It's important that employees are all treated in the same way when a bullying or harassment complaint is made. Following the established and communicated procedure will ensure that happens.

**Maintain confidentiality** The process should ensure privacy for all parties involved. Details of the matter should only be known to those directly concerned (except their representative or support person).

**Communicate process and outcomes** All parties need to be told what to expect during the process, how long it will take, the reasons for any delays and what will happen at the end. Give them clear reasons for any actions that are taken or not taken.

### Keep good documentation

Even if the issue isn't formally investigated, keep a record of all informal conversations, meetings and interviews detailing dates and times, who was present, what was discussed and the agreed outcomes. Keep these records in a secure place.

**Implement resolutions and follow-up** Agree a timeframe with the complainant to review the effectiveness of the action plan.