

Documenting bullying behaviours

How to communicate a complaint

One of the most common problems mentioned by Line Managers or HR Managers receiving a bullying complaint is the quality of the information and documentation provided by complainants. Remember, if you believe you are being bullied in the workplace, it is in the interest of your employer to respond. However, the quality of the information you provide can improve the ability of the organisation to act quickly, fairly, and decisively.

Avoiding 'He Said, She Said'

If your complaint is vague and uses subjective language, only expresses your conclusions of what has been happening, it can be very difficult for the problem not to end up in the 'he said/she said' category of complaint. Some examples of vague or subjective statements are:

- "His behaviour made me feel upset and embarrassed."
- "She humiliated me in the meeting."
- "He physically assaulted me."
- "They are isolating me."



Communicating your complaint

1. Focus on what happened, not how you feel now. You need to document the bullying behaviours you are experiencing:
 - What did the person do?
 - What did the person say?
 - Capture the exact words, describe the delivery, and actions.

If she put her face within two inches of your face and then thumped you on the forehead, include this. These are the "bullying" behaviours. If he raised his voice or actually threatened you, include this as well as what exactly was said.
 2. Outline any corroborating evidence. Did anyone else see the interaction? Ask them if it seemed bullying to them, and if so, ask them for their support.
 3. Reenact the experience in your description. A good tip is to write as if you are translating your experiences into a script. When you capture the exact words, tone, and feel, then others can see what the person is doing and HR will have a more precise starting point to progress the complaint. Your story will be more credible, and whoever meets with the individual in question will be able to give him or her specific feedback, along with advice as to what will be considered acceptable and non-acceptable workplace behaviour in the future.
 4. Stick to the facts
- Your story will be more credible if you curb your natural emotional responses, minimise inflammatory language, and simply share your view of what the other person did. In the long run, an objective approach is more effective than emotional allegations.