NHS Staff Council
Health, Safety & Wellbeing Group

NHS Employers

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Tackling bullying and harassment in the NHS

17.6% of staff experience bullying or harassment in the last year from colleagues.[1] (2024)

9.5% of staff experienced bullying or harassment in the last year from their manager.[1] (2024)

98% of staff experience incivility in the workplace.[4]

Staff who see incivility have a **20%** decrease in their performance and a **50%** decrease in wanting to help others.[4]

Disproportionate impact

- **28.6%** of staff from all other ethnic groups other than white experienced at least one incident of harassment, bullying or abuse.[1]
- **23.6%** of disabled staff reported bullying or harassment by other colleagues in the last year.[1]
- LGBTQ + staff are more likely to experience bullying or harassment than heterosexual staff.[1]

Costs to the NHS

- Toxic behaviour costs the NHS more than **£2bn** a year.[3]
- If bullied NHS workers left their jobs, it would mean a loss of **42,681** staff.[3]
- The cost of replacing those staff would be **£231.9m**.[3]
- Sickness presenteeism due to bullying costs **£604.4m** a year.[3]

What is the impact?

On the organisation:
- Greater risk of human error[2]
- Poorer patient care
- Lower morale
- Increased absenteeism
- Reduced productivity and teamwork[4]

On the individual:
- Anxiety and depression
- Disengagement and isolation
- Take their feelings home with them[3]
- Reduced confidence[4]

What can my organisation do?
- Promote NHS England's civility and respect toolkit to meet the People Plan's vision.[7]
- Create policies to develop and promote a positive culture.
- Appoint a leader to work with your freedom to speak up guardian.
- Monitor organisational data to identify patterns to target interventions.[5]

What can my manager do?
- Identify early warning signs and challenge inappropriate behaviours.
- Respond quickly to complaints and issues, ensuring effective wellbeing conversations are had.
- Engage and involve trade union colleagues.[6]
- Provide training on inappropriate behaviour and its impact.[5]

What can I do?
- Ask the individual to stop.
- Speak to your manager, senior colleague and/or union rep.
- Keep a record of the incidents.
- Speak up when you see staff treated unkindly.
- Report the incident to your freedom to speak up guardian.

1 NHS Staff Survey, 2024.
2 Workplace bullying in emergency nursing: Development of a grounded theory using situational analysis. (Wolf et al, 2017) Bullying in the Healthcare Industry (Dalton, 2016).
3 The price of fear: Estimating the financial cost of bullying and harassment to the NHS in England. (Kline and Lewis, 2018).
4 Make or Break: Incivility in the workplace ESTH 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1EDatTYMkE
5 Evidence synthesis on the occurrence, causes, consequences, prevention and management of bullying and harassing behaviours to inform decision-making in the NHS, Illing et al, (February 2013).
6 Creating a culture of civility, compassion and respect in the NHS, 2019, Social Partnership Forum.
7 NHS England's Supporting our staff - A toolkit to promote cultures of civility and respect.

Working in partnership