

# Stress at Work – Bullying

## Advice for members experiencing bullying

(on an individual or collective basis)



Employers have a duty of care to you to protect your health, safety & welfare, and this includes your mental as well as your physical health. Employers should have clear and well-publicised policies on bullying including expectations of appropriate behaviour and processes for making and investigating complaints.

**A Hostile Work Environment** – typically can result when an organisation pursues unrealistic service targets or budget constraints, led by strong dominant management. The behaviours and expectations toward staff often become unreasonable and excessive. Another example is employers failing to provide adequate support or intervention against abusive patients, their relatives or friends. Staff may endure this abuse and become unwell and demoralised. If you experience this type of workplace:

### DO

- Notify your safety rep or steward. Participate actively in the strategy they develop. This may include things like;
  - a meeting with CSP members to discuss the problem and set up an action plan to challenge the employer on attitudes or lack of action
  - or a survey on bullying or stress to provide information to assist in the CSP's case to get the employer to take action.
- If the CSP submits a formal collective grievance to your employer - support your representative by attending their meetings, keeping yourself informed on developments, and give feedback when asked which may assist in the collection of evidence or inform the CSP on how to argue their case on your behalf.

### DON'T

- Be apathetic or justify bad behaviour from patients as something you have to endure because of your duty of care for them. Employers should display notices/posters in wards and treatment areas stating the organisation's expectation of behaviour from patients, their relatives and friends including the consequences if they persist abusing staff. Managers should also write to abusive patients requesting an apology with a warning that services to be withdrawn if their aggressive behaviour continues.

**Bullying by a colleague** – It is important that behaviour by a colleague that causes you distress is appropriately challenged, and that you feel your concerns are responded to effectively by the employer.

### DO

- Raise the issue with your CSP safety rep or steward – others may also be suffering.
- Keep a written record/diary of incidents, including your own responses and feelings
- If you feel able to, confront the bully, and if you cannot consider writing a letter explaining why you object to their behaviour and ask them to stop. Your steward can assist you in the drafting of your letter.
- If the behaviour continues after the individual is aware of your concerns then follow your employer's complaints process as outlined in their bullying or dignity at work policies. Your steward or safety rep will support you throughout this process.

### DON'T

- Put up with it – you have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect. Your actions also protect other work colleagues.