

## Debbie Hutchings [UNITE] Presentation slides



### Dignity at Work

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Promoting Equality

### What is Dignity at Work?

Term used to describe how we should treat colleagues with dignity and respect within the workplace

Looking at behaviour both from an organisations point of view and as individuals towards colleagues



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### Legal Background

- Dignity at Work Bill was drafted in 1996
- Blocked by Conservative Govt Feb 1997
- Bill progresses through House of Lords in Dec 2001 under the guidance of Baroness Ann Gibson



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### Defining Bullying and Harassing Behaviour

Bullying Behaviour:

Offensive, Intimidating, Malicious, Insulting, Repeated, Persistent Negative Act

Harassing Behaviour:

Unwanted conduct, Actions and Comments which are unacceptable and demeaning



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### Bullying and Harassment and law

Some aspects of unacceptable behaviour are addressed in employment legislation, for example in areas of discrimination and harassment, however there is no specific statute regarding bullying in the workplace.



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### Bullying and Harassment and law

Unlike the UK a number of European countries do have specific legislation in place to address dignity at work issues, specifically bullying.



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## Types of bullying:

- Pressure/unwitting
- Predatory
- Dispute-related
- Corporate
- Institutional
- Pair/"good guy/bad guy"
- Gang
- Cyber

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## The effects of bullying behaviour

organisations are under constant pressure to change to meet global demands and society's differing needs. The strain of restructuring, increased productivity and more competitive working climates often generate negative consequences – and bullying can often be a damaging consequence of these changes.

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## The effects of bullying behaviour

The harmful effects of bullying behaviour can include:

- An increase in absenteeism and ill health
- Loss of trained, experienced employees
- Ineffective and poor management styles
- Unhealthy working climate, conflict in teams
- Poor customer service
- Poor industrial relations
- A rise in expensive employment tribunal claims
- Loss of public image and reputation

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## The effects to an individual may cause

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| ○ Sleeplessness    | ○ Acute anxiety       |
| ○ Nausea           | ○ Panic attacks       |
| ○ Sweating/shaking | ○ Irritability        |
| ○ Skin complaints  | ○ Lost confidence     |
| ○ Stomach problems | ○ Anger/frustration   |
| ○ Migraine         | ○ Depression          |
| ○ Lethargy         | ○ Suicidal thoughts   |
| ○ Palpitations     | ○ Loss of self esteem |
| ○ Backache         | ○ Lack of motivation  |

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## Seeking Resolution:

In seeking resolution, most members will simply want the behaviour to stop, as should the organisation.

The organisation should also ensure that they accept responsibility by not colluding with behaviours that create a culture of unacceptable behaviours.

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## Methods of Resolution:

Interventions should have the aim of helping the perpetrator:

- Recognise that their behaviour was inappropriate/unacceptable and take responsibility
- Identify any underlying causes for their inappropriate/unacceptable behaviour and address these
- Offer a genuine apology for the distress caused
- Learn how to behave in a way that respects and values the dignity of others

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## Methods of Resolution:

There are a number of methods by which the perpetrators can be helped to examine and reflect on their behaviour and avoid any repetition. They should also be made aware of the consequences if they fail to do so.

For a low level incident, simply raising the matter to the perpetrator's attention may suffice.

Other options may include

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## Methods of Resolution:

- Behaviour modification/awareness raising programmes/ training
- Counselling
- Coaching
- Group Work
- Group training
- Mentoring
- Monitoring

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## A Collective Approach:

As a trade union, Unite recognises that the most effective way of dealing with unacceptable behaviour is to try and prevent it happening in the first place.

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## A Collective Approach:

To genuinely promote dignity at work and positively deal with targets and perpetrators of bullying and harassment organisations need more than just a policy. A live strategy which is constantly being applied across the whole organisation is required.

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## A collective approach:

- An audit to analyse the extent of bullying/unacceptable behaviour
- A policy which promotes positive behaviours
- Training for line managers
- A clear process to raise a complaint
- A network of reps to assist
- Clear communication
- Training on raising awareness
- Regular Monitoring
- Independent and confidential counselling
- Provision of coaching for the perpetrator

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## Organising:

Every trade unionist should look for opportunities to organise around relevant workplace issues and Dignity at Work is a classic example.

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## Organising:

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- Raising Awareness
- Circulating Information
- Holding Events

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## Action Pack

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As a result of the Dignity at work project an action pack has been produced to provide information and guidance on positive action.

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## Identifying Behaviours

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At some stage we have all had experience of unacceptable behaviour, either first hand as the target or as a witness.

In order to make change in any workplace we must recognise negative and positive behaviours

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## Thankyou

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