

Fear and loathing in the office - bullying in the workplace. An fe₃ mindstretch 14 July 2009

The views expressed here are the personal opinions of the individuals and not necessarily those of their organisations.

The following people were present at this mindstretch:


Bozena (Robinson Low Francis)
Dilys (Westminster Children's Society)
Fiona (Coaching & Communications Centre)
Gary (fe₃ consulting)
Karen (fe₃ consulting)
Mike (Chaucer)
Neil (Westminster Children's Society)
Paul (Ministry of Justice)
Zoe (Ministry of Justice)

Our venue was very generously provided by Chaucer Syndicates in the person of Mike Smith.

After introductions Karen asked participants to say what they thought bullying in the workplace is. Responses were:

- It's to do with the perceptions of the person being bullied
- Being threatened with consequences if you don't do something
- Misuse of power, in the eyes of the person being bullied
- Misuse of experience/ other relationships (what and who you know)
- Subtle - childish behaviour)
- Exploitation of relationship/ situation - manipulation
- Consequence ... made me feel bad
- Emotions and feelings: not logical
- Intimidation

Karen then presented the following slide:



What is it?

- No universally agreed definition (again!)
- HSE defined two categories of bullying:
 - Personal
 - work-related

Andreas Liefoghe of Birkbeck College, University of London, has written critically and extensively about “bullying” and also “stress” - being of the view that little can definitively be “known” about the concept of bullying if people's views of what it is don't align. In addition, the different definitions of workplace bullying mean that estimates of the prevalence of bullying vary considerably between studies.

In their review of writing on bullying, the HSE looked at observable behaviour, identified through the literature, developed diagnostics and also websites and official sources. Their aim was to see how far the behaviours could be mapped against (and therefore solved) by their stress management standards. HSE estimated in 2006 that each year in the UK, there are more than half a million cases of work related stress, costing employers an estimated £3.7 billion. On average each case of work related stress involves 29 working days lost, an average total of 13m days. The contribution of bullying as a cause of stress to these figures is estimated to be 10-20% dependent on source and variations in measurement criteria.

In line with Hoel and Cooper (2001), HSE found that most of the bullying behaviours fall into two general categories - personal and work-related. They admitted that some of the behaviours were ambiguous, depending on the context.

Bullying has been called variously:

- Mobbing
- Harassment
- Employee abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Incivility
- Aggression
- Unacceptable/aversive/hostile behaviour

The difference in term is often related to where the research was carried out. For example, in the UK and Ireland, we call it bullying, in Germany, Austria and Scandinavia it tends to be called mobbing and in the US it has been referred to as emotional abuse. Here are some of the personal behaviours identified by the HSE in their review as bullying:

Ignoring/ excluding/ silent treatment/ isolating	Attacking person's beliefs, attitudes, lifestyle/ appearance/devaluing with ref to gender/accusations of being mentally disturbed
Belittling remarks/ lies told about you/ opinions marginalised	Using obscene/offensive language/gestures/material
Malicious rumours/ gossip	Ganging up/witch hunt/singled out
Public humiliation	Intimidating/acting in a condescending

	manner
Being shouted at	Intrusion on privacy
Insulting comments made about your personal life	Sexual approaches/ unwanted physical contact
Threats of violence (or threats in general)	Verbal abuse
Physical attacks	Inaccurate accusation
Theft/destruction of property	Insinuating glances/gestures/dirty looks
Tampering with personal effects	Encouraged to feel guilty
Ridiculing/ insulting/ teasing/sarcasm	Persistent criticism

Bozena thought that whether or not these behaviours would amount to bullying depends on the context; in particular, whether the intention is to pick on an individual, whereas Zoe thought that some of them would be clearly out of order. Dilys thought it depends on how the person feels about the behaviour and Mike observed that some of these behaviours may be cultural.

Examples of work-related behaviours were:

Giving unachievable tasks/impossible deadlines/overloading/ unmanageable workloads	Offensive administrative sanctions e.g. denying leave
Meaningless tasks/unpleasant jobs	Exclude/isolate/views ignored
Belittling person's ability/undermining	Changing goalposts/targets
Withholding/concealing information	Not providing enough training/resources
Undervaluing contribution/ no credit where due/taking credit	Reducing opportunities for expression/ interrupting when speaking
Constant criticism	Negative attacks on person/sabotage
Underwork/ working below competence/ removing responsibility/demotion	Supplying incorrect/unclear information
Unreasonable/inappropriate monitoring	Making threats/hints about job security
Judging wrongly	No support from manager
Scapegoating	Abuse/threats
	Denial of opportunity

Zoe thought that perception was very important in, for example, the difference between giving feedback and belittling someone. Paul thought that fairness needed to be considered; in the extreme we might discourage people from taking action on performance. Bozena and Paul thought that being seen to be reasonable was key and that this is not objective, but a question of judgement. Karen thought that trust could be a significant factor, whilst Fiona added that intent must be important. In general we felt that it can be difficult to tell the difference between being bullied and being closely managed. Bozena thought that really bad bullying is subtle and covert, often over many years: it can be hard to pin down evidence.

Karen suggested a few things that perhaps are NOT bullying:

- Counterproductive behaviour (CPB): organisational misbehaviour at the individual level
- Employee emotional abuse (EEA)
- Harassment

We agreed that CPB is not bullying, but the other two look similar to it. Paul pointed out that most white-collar bullying is verbal and often related to (lack of) respect. Dilys observed that employees and groups can bully their managers; Paul said it is therefore possible to consider some of the behaviour of Trades Union representatives as bullying!

Karen offered the following working definition of bullying:

“Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding or negatively affecting someone’s work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process, it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal “strength” are in conflict.”

Einarson, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper (2003) *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International perspectives in research and practice*

We were not quite sure about the last sentence and Dilys noted that the definition of strength could be an issue. Karen then offered another:

“A working definition of bullying includes the repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are unwanted by the victim and which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress and may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment.”

(Hadjifotiou, 1983)

Paul noted that both include the idea of repetition, whilst Gary observed that neither included intention. Dilys thought that the word “directed” implied a subtle degree of intent. Mike said they were both very much from the “victim” point of view and Karen agreed, pointing out that almost all studies are of self-report. Gary thought it interesting that there is a 20 year gap between the two versions.

Karen went on to explain that some authors suggest that other areas of research may usefully contribute to our understanding of workplace bullying.

The psychological contract: "An individual's belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party...a belief that some form of a promise has been made and that the terms and conditions of the contract have been accepted by both parties." Arnold (1998) from Robinson and Rousseau. This might be relevant at the interpersonal level - that there is a belief that an implicit set of behavioural norms in the workplace are operating - i.e. not bullying. - and that there are consequences if they are broken. The outcomes for violation of the psychological contract include fear, anger and anxiety - appropriate as a response to bullying? Also some views that the break of the promise is something is "emotionally charged" - so the relationship with bullying is about the study of a phenomena (i.e. the psychological contract) and what happens when something goes wrong. Bullying can be viewed as an interpersonal relationship where something has gone wrong.

Psychological climate: Parker et al (2003) define psychological climate as employees' descriptors of their work environment. There are a number of models within the literature as to what constitutes psychological climate and Parker et al highlight one which describes five domains of climate:

- Job characteristics
- Role characteristics
- Leadership (i.e. goal emphasis and support)
- Work group and social environment characteristics (e.g. cooperation, pride and warmth)
- Organisational and sub-system attributes

The HSE believe that it is the leadership and work group domains that bear most resemblance to bullying. From their meta-analysis, Parker et al conclude that psychological climate does have reliable relationships to various workplace outcomes, including that of psychological well-being. It's interesting to note that there is no accepted model for psychological climate.

We went on to discuss how we would know if an organisation were suffering from bullying. Our conclusions were:

- Gossip
- Turnover, absence levels, exit interviews
- Long term sickness
- Breakdowns
- Anonymous reports
- Union representation
- Direct feedback, surveys etc.
- Observation
- Complaints
- Very quiet offices (where this is not the "norm")

We also thought it useful to consider categories of bullying e.g.

- Managers to staff and vice versa
- Peer to peer
- To or from customers , clients and suppliers

Karen then explained some of the statistics about bullying. Reports by Einarsen and Skogstad (1996), Niedl (1995) and Vartia (1996) reveal approximately equal victimisation rates between men and women, but later studies - Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel & Vartia (2003) indicate that two thirds of the targets are women. Zoe thought this might be something to do with women being more willing to report it than men.

Zapf et al also revealed that 50-80% of the perpetrators are managers, most often men. Bozena thought that this may just reflect the fact that most managers are men. Interestingly, a study conducted by Coyne Chong, Seigne and Randall in 2003, revealed that 19.3% of a sample of 288 employees of various work groups admitted they had subjected someone else to bullying, but this decreased when the role of perpetrator was defined more operationally - that is a combination of self report and peer report - to 2.7%. There had to be at least 2 colleague reports.

Many of the targets of bullying suffer from severe health problems - depression, anxiety, compulsive behaviour or post traumatic stress symptoms - although there has been comparatively little research done on the consequences.

Karen then moved the discussion on to looking at some of the antecedents of bullying. This slide summarises the information identified in the HSE review:

Antecedents of bullying			
	Organisational	Social	Individual
f e 3	Change at work: -Of supervisor or manager -Of job -Wider organisational change	Perceptions of injustice - violations of the norms of reciprocity and fairness	Characteristics of bully: -Protection of self esteem -Lack of social competence -Micro-politically motivated behaviour
	Control and support Role conflict Role ambiguity Quality of leadership -Low satisfaction with leadership -Laissez-faire management style -Autocratic management style	Hostile cultures and climates	Characteristics of victim -Being in a prominent position -Being low on social competence and assertiveness Overachievement and high consciousness Lack of control or autonomy
	Negative work environment	"toughness" of modern work cultures	

Organisational antecedents of bullying

Change at work

A number of different types of change appear to have correlations between aggression and bullying, but these should be interpreted with care as a variety of definitions of aggression/ bullying are used. However, they include:

- Change in management - associated with aggression for Baron and Neuman (1996); also Hoel and Cooper (2000); Unison (1997); Rayner (1997)
- Recent change in job - Hoel & Cooper (2002); Unison (1997); Rayner (1997)
- Organisational change (e.g. budget or pay cuts, restructuring) - associated with aggression for Baron and Neuman (1996) and with bullying for Hoel & Cooper (2000)
- Social change (e.g. increase in diversity in work group - associated with aggression for Baron and Neuman (1996)

Baron and Neuman believe that different organisational changes can promote anger, anxiety (e.g. with increased computer monitoring); perception of unfairness (e.g. when there has been a pay cut); negative affect and frustration.

Control

Andersson (2001) suggested that bullying is related to low control and high demands. Zapf et al (1996) compared perceptions of job control and task complexity between bullied and non-bullied samples (doing different jobs) and found that victims had a higher degree of task complexity than the non-bullied sample. They also found that the victim group had less control over time than the sample group. Zapf et al consider that where there is less control over task time, people have less time for conflict management, which means that conflicts escalate to a bullying relationship...

Support

Although evidence is by no means conclusive, both Andersson and Zapf suggest that a lack of support from colleagues and manager is related to the presence of bullying. In another study, Einarsen et al (1994) found an association between bullying and dissatisfaction with the amount of feedback/ guidance/ instructions from management. In qualitative studies, support for bullied individuals from others who have also been bullied brings a reduction in shame at being bullied and also points to the interdependent nature of self identity and resistance - both need support and validation from others.

Role conflict and ambiguity

Einarsen et al (1994) reported that victims of bullying were more likely to report higher levels of role conflict than non-victims, and also higher levels of role ambiguity. This is supported by Vartia (1996) who reported that victims in her study reported less clarity of goals than other employees, and Leymann

(1996) who found a lack of clarity of command structures and roles among nurse victims of bullying

Quality of leadership

Hardly surprising that bullying is linked with low satisfaction with leadership. Bjorkqvist et al (1994) noted that risk factors for bullying included a strict hierarchical organisation and an authoritarian atmosphere. Leymann reported that an analysis of around 800 case studies of workplace bullying suggested that "extremely poorly organised production and/or working methods and an almost helpless or uninterested management were found."

This is supported by findings from Vartia and O'Moore et al (1998) which associates bullying with autocratic leadership and an authoritarian way of dealing with disagreements and settling conflicts. However, there is still some debate regarding what different people perceive as autocratic leadership. Howl and Cooper (2000) found an association between bullying and "negative" management styles such as autocratic and laissez-faire.

Negative work environment

Hoel and Salin (2003) believe that factors of a negative work environment promote bullying behaviours in a variety of ways. These are:

- Employees feel they work in a stressful environment - they complain, making the manager retaliate and this starts/escalates the bullying process
- A stressful environment makes employees feel "aroused", perhaps generally angry and resentful which then, if they also feel generally negative about the world, can lead to frustration and then aggression/bullying
- A stressful environment can make people break or violate norms of behaviour, leading to bullying from others in response to the breaking of rules

Paul and Zoe thought that the trend to matrix structures was creating less clarity. Paul also thought that organisations can indulge in systematic bullying of their workforce e.g. by forcing them to adopt the "party line", giving them poor conditions or extremes of hot desking. Neil agreed that the physical environment can encourage bullying.

Social antecedents of bullying

Perceptions of injustice

Greenburg and Barling (1998) report that two workplace factors predicted aggression against a supervisor - poorer perceptions of procedural justice and the number of surveillance methods used to monitor employees. This seems fairly sensible - both as a bully and as a victim. No fear of being reported against and none of being believed.

Paul thought there is likely to be a societal dimension as well as a social one. He postulated that as society itself becomes more bullying (e.g. surveillance, police powers, legislation), then organisations and people will take their lead from this. Bozena agreed that societal intentions can often appear unhelpful. Neil felt that this related back to the question of trust. Mike gave the example of RFID - a passive device in many electronic components that can be used in covert ways.

Fiona thought that one issue is that we don't prepare people to work together, so that, when they go to work, we have to make them do so, which in turn leads to an increase in bullying. Bozena agreed, adding that there are families in which two generations have been out of work, compounding the lack of preparation. Fiona also thought that there is more interest in bullying and this has caused the increase in reporting. Karen thought that bullying gets more covert as perpetrators get older. Neil, on the other hand, thought that the basic tactics were quite stable i.e. what can I get away with?

Individual antecedents of bullying

Characteristics of the bully

Important to note that there are very few studies which concentrate on the bully, but most look at previous experiences in school and personality traits. The Big Five factors and their constituent traits can be summarized as follows: **Openness** - appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, curiosity, and variety of experience.

Conscientiousness - a tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully and aim for achievement; planned rather than spontaneous behaviour.

Extraversion - energy, positive emotions, and the tendency to seek stimulation and the company of others.

Agreeableness - a tendency to be compassionate and co-operative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.

Neuroticism - a tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety or depression, or vulnerability; sometimes called emotional instability.

In a review of self esteem research, Baumeister, Smart and Boden (1996) proposed that it is high self esteem that is related to aggressive behaviour, and low self-esteem is related to withdrawal. Individuals with low self esteem are rarely aggressive, they say, because they fear losing the encounter.

However, Matthiesen and Einarsen (2007) believe that high self esteem can constitute a stable or unstable self-evaluation, which in turn may lead to aggressive behaviour in response to even minor threats. In addition, high self esteem has been linked with perfectionism, arrogance and narcissism (Ashforth 1994). Matthiesen and Einarsen acknowledge that the idea that bullies are characterised by elevated levels of self esteem goes against the body of

academic wisdom that has long pointed to low self esteem as the root of violence. In their study, Matthiesen and Einarsen investigated the idea of high but *unstable* self esteem and this was partially supported.

Characteristics of victims

The summary indicates that being visible is one characteristic of victims, and also scoring low on assertiveness. Being low on social competence - often also insecure - is another characteristic of victims of bullying. According to studies, victims are more likely to have difficulty coping with personal criticism, to be easily upset, to view the world as threatening, to be anxious, tense and suspicious of others. Among schoolchildren, social intelligence has been found to be negatively related to victimisation (Kaukainen et al 2002).

The research here is again, inconclusive. Zapf (1999) identified two subgroups of bullying targets - one which could not be distinguished from the control group in terms of their personality dimensions, and the other, which scored significantly higher in anxiety and depression as well as social skills. This indicates that there are different types of victims.

One type of these, not mentioned in the summary above, is that of provocative victims. Provocative victims were identified within schools and are characterised by a combination of both anxious and aggressive reaction problems. This group of children often has problems with concentration, and behaves in ways that may cause irritation and tension. They also risk social isolation or exclusion, because others perceive their behaviour as annoying and aggressive. Finally, provocative victims are as capable of bullying as they are of being bullied, primarily because of their aggression. Brodsky (1976) has claimed that "after studying harassers and studying their victims, it seemed that there was never a victim who would not have made an excellent harasser".

Paul thought that bullies and victims can be regarded as opposite sides of the same coin: they have a mutual dependence. Fiona thought that in some cases we reward micro-political behaviour - calling it entrepreneurship.

Karen thought that perhaps provocative victims, who are anxious and aggressive (i.e. not socially competent), are victimised because they make people feel uncomfortable: a victim can thus easily become a perpetrator. Paul agreed, adding that there is evidence that the way people behave makes them vulnerable (e.g. looking scared makes one more likely to be mugged).

Karen then moved on to the motives of bullies. There is little research evidence, but some theories. **Status inconsistency** is defined as occurring in a given environment when an individual is different (inconsistent) from others in one or more status dimensions - age, race, religion, education level.

Academics (specifically Heames et al, 2006) believe a variety of theories lend support to the idea that the conflict created by status inconsistency could lead to uncomfortable relationships that could drive an individual who feels ostracised to retaliate through bullying acts. The authors believe that status inconsistency could be the foundation for differences found in the group and thus provide the context for the occurrence of bullying. The underpinning of status inconsistency rests on the social stratification of the work groups based on a number of social ranking indicators. These indicators establish "ranks" that may be empirical fact, and are moderated by the individual's perception of their own locus of control. If the group member experiencing status inconsistency in the group wants to change and it's in their ability to do so, they do so and meet the expectations of their peers. If this can't be achieved, they act out dysfunctional behaviour - i.e. they bully.

Theories that link status inconsistency to bullying are:

- Social identity theory
- Frustration-aggression theory
- Realistic group theory

Social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner, suggests there is a cognitive need among some people to divide the world into a "them" and an "us". Given even superficial criteria, groups will split into camps of the in group and out group where the out group consists of those who do not fit the norms.

The frustration aggression theory has its roots in Freud's view that the frustration of modern life will inevitably lead to hostility.

Realistic group theory suggests that a perceived "threat" against a group's interest causes inter-group conflict and can generate ethnocentrism and antagonism between the parties.

Neil thought that some people bully to deflect attention e.g. homophobic behaviour. Fiona commented that some bullies know exactly what they are doing and get gratification from it. Neil thought that it might be helpful to use these theoretical frameworks as means of discussing the BEHAVIOUR rather than using the emotive label of "bully".

Whatever the motives of bullies, there is no doubt that employers are concerned about its impact on victims' health, both physical and psychological. Karen summarised some research on this subject.


While there seems to be a connection between exposure to bullying and ill health, the causal mechanisms are still being debated. Quine (2001) thinks there may be three possible routes for the association:

- Being bullied leads to psychological ill health
- Being depressed leads to being singled out for bullying and then bullied people are not able to cope and suffer ill health
- Or depressed people may be likely to perceive themselves as being bullied and to report lower levels of job satisfaction

Other researchers believe that the social conflict/ isolation and poor social support are linked to morbidity and mortality (e.g. heart disease) and social relationship problems have been thought to decrease a person's resistance to health problems through the weakening of the immune system. (so bullies suffer ill health as well as the bullied?)

Bozena thought that some areas in organisations will always tolerate bullying because it produces higher productivity. Gary thought that some organisational policies towards sickness absence could be seen as bullying.

We went on to consider what organisations do about bullying. Karen presented the following slide to introduce the topic:



What organisations do about it?

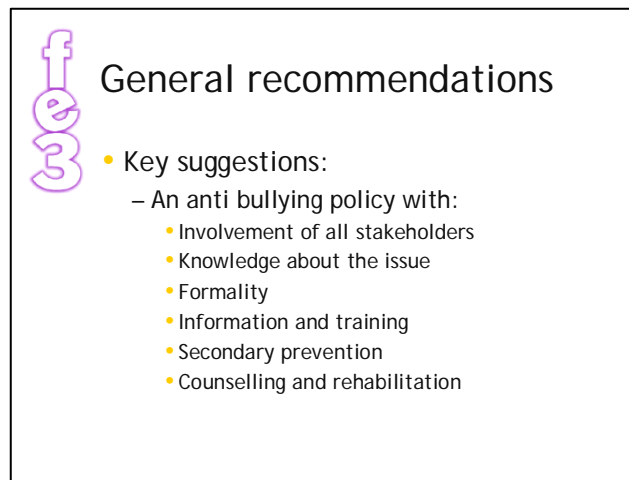
- Programmes aimed at three levels -
 - Prevention
 - Intervention
 - Rehabilitation
- Problems
 - Little evaluation
 - Interventions have their own problems

Various authors have identified that programmes of intervention should be aimed at three levels - for many, the aim of the intervention is to "do things to create a positive psychosocial work environment" (HSE). The HSE also notes that there are few, if any, formal evaluations of bullying intervention programmes, confirmed also by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Other issues are around the idea of empowerment. Rayner, Cooper and Hoel (2001) have noted that interventions aimed at increasing employee control over their work have been difficult to implement in reality. There may also be problems with initiatives aimed at management level as they might serve to reinforce management control - which is a potential antecedent of bullying. Initiatives aimed at screening out bullies in the selection process can be fraught with problems as the selection tools can be unreliable.

Mike and Gary thought that there are obvious problems with research in this area, because focussing on any aspect of work tends to increase the willingness of people to talk about it (e.g. stress). Bozena thought the level of trust in managers was important. Zoe agreed, adding that some organisations deal with bullying senior managers by paying them off.

Finally, we tried to look for some recommendations about how to deal with the problem of bullying. Karen presented a summary, presented by the HSE, of the suggestions of Unison, ACAS, WHO, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Swedish "victimisation at work" Act.



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General recommendations

- Key suggestions:
 - An anti bullying policy with:
 - Involvement of all stakeholders
 - Knowledge about the issue
 - Formality
 - Information and training
 - Secondary prevention
 - Counselling and rehabilitation

All stakeholders (trade unions, grievance committees, HR departments) need to discuss what an "undesirable interaction" would look like and pull together a systemic approach which involves them all.

The HSE believes that incidents of bullying should be explored through employee surveys, anonymous and confidential questionnaires, one to one discussions, following up absenteeism, complaints and sick leave. They recommend that the issue is considered in terms of risk assessment, and should be measured as such. The HSE also believes that quantitative methods are the most effective at measuring the incidence of bullying although Karen was not convinced about this, given the subjective nature of the term and the subjective nature of how bullying is suffered.

The formality of the policy is also key to its effectiveness, say the HSE. Organisations should include a definition of bullying which is drawn up with employees and might also include a code of ethics/conduct. In addition, they suggest including a statement of commitment and a statement that bullying is not tolerated as well as the procedural steps which happen if a complaint is made.

The group felt that stating zero tolerance is practically meaningless. Mike thought it similar to whistle-blowing charters, whilst Paul asked what would be OK if one didn't have zero tolerance.

Policies will hardly be any use if managers don't know how to use them and training for all staff and awareness campaigns should be run. A paper for the European Parliament in 2001 suggested that "general education advertising" is the most proven method for the prevention of bullying, also recommending that it targets management. Managers are of course expected to lead by example and create norms of behaviour.

The HSE also notes that commentators have recommended that confidants, contact officers or bullying representatives should be appointed, trade union reps involved and mediators used. Other, less specific examples for prevention from the literature include:

- Social skills and conflict management training
- Work redesign
- Improving the organisational culture (?!)
- Leadership training

Impact Of Dealing With Bullying?

Tehrani (2003) suggests using professionally trained counsellors. They might use debriefing, narrative therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy, psychotherapy and self help groups.

Occupational health services can be involved in analysing an employee's situation, in a mediator role, or with design and provision of bullying training and policy design. Rehabilitation is often centred on minimising PTSD type symptoms. Bullies, as well as targets, may need rehabilitating.

It's interesting to note that a recent CIPD survey about bullying noted that 83% of organisations responding had an anti-bullying policy in place, but management was spending an average 450 days per year resolving conflict.

We discussed these recommendations and the following observations resulted. Paul wondered whether it's possible to get to the top in any organisation without bullying anyone. The trouble is that the definition - if too broad - dilutes the focus and distracts from the truly nasty stuff that happens. Zoe agreed and also thought that it's easy for organisations to tolerate initially low levels of bullying to get results and then gradually for it to become a problem.

Dilys thought that there need to be checks and balances in the policy, as there is a danger that they can simply drive the problem underground. One definition of bullying offered by Bozena is that it is intolerable when you have

no choice and that the impact of bullying over a period may include that it reduces the victim's ability to choose. She agreed that the use of confidants can be helpful as they can provide a vital release mechanism for the victim - even if they don't expect anything to be done. Fiona pointed out that a key part of helping victims is to remind them that they always have some kind of choice or control. Karen thought that the role of a confidant would be a difficult one, given the subject matter.

On the issue of who should be helped, Paul argued that the main focus should be on victims because they most need help, though it is possible to decide that perpetrators should receive attention as they may continue to cause more damage otherwise. Bozena thought we have to invest in both, otherwise the bully will just move on and do it somewhere else; we need to break into the circle.

Zoe thought that interventions need to include improving the managerial response to bullying. This led us to consider whether bullying is more prevalent in some parts of the economy. Paul thought that public sector workers might be more likely to see themselves as victims of bullying. Zoe agreed, adding that this may be linked to high levels of unionisation (so more support for complaints) as well as to the type of people that are recruited. Dilys said that the worst example of bullying she had seen was in the charity sector and that it was about exploitation of employees on the basis of their values.

In summary, we concluded that, to deal with the problem of bullying:

- All of the stakeholders need to be involved
- People have to be given a choice not to be bullied
- Some form of measurement and reporting is required
- There needs to be sanction through the disciplinary process