



Harassment, Bullying and Conflict at Work

Quick Action Guide for Union Reps and Contacts

Is this action guide really for me?

Yes! This guide is **not** asking you to take on personal cases or to represent members.

It is designed to ensure that you are able to talk to a member about a concern and then pass them on to the correct person who can help.

Why is this Important?

The Staff Survey tells us that whilst **63%** of us believe that the FC doesn't tolerate harassment and bullying, **16%** (≈500 people) believe that they have experienced H&B in the last two years. Of those that have experienced it more than half didn't report it; and of those that did report it only **14%** were happy with the outcome.

Quick Checklist

If a member contacts you about a problem at work:

- » Treat their complaint seriously. Listen sympathetically and be supportive.
- » Encourage the member to make and keep written notes of what has happened.
- » Ask them what they would like done about the complaint.
- » Advise them that you would like to pass their complaint onto a UHA who can advise them on the options that might be available.

Further information and guidance is given over the page.

Introduction

This guide has been produced for all union reps and workplace contacts in the Forestry Commission who might be approached by a member regarding harassment or bullying.

It contains information about:

- » The first things you should do if a member comes to you with a complaint.
- » When and how you can get help with the case.

The guide is not intended:

- » As a definitive resource on harassment and bullying (references for further information are given).
- » As a comprehensive guide to handling complex personal cases.
- » To cover broader aspects of tackling harassment and bullying, such as through collective bargaining, workplace surveys, workplace culture change programmes.

Our aims are:

- » To make it easier for members to report concerns.
- » To ensure that they get a sympathetic response when they do.
- » To ensure that they get the best possible chance of a satisfactory outcome.

What is Harassment and Bullying

Although the terms 'harassment' and 'bullying' have different legal meanings, they tend to be used interchangeably.

One of the simplest definitions of harassment and bullying is *any unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.*

Examples of this could be:

- » Being shouted at by a manager or colleague either in private or public.
- » Spreading rumours, insulting someone, or making derogatory personal comments.
- » Excessive or oppressive supervision.
- » Threatening behaviour.
- » Sudden rages or displays of temper.
- » Constant criticism.
- » Unwanted sexual advances.

Depending on the circumstances the inappropriate behaviour might only occur once or could be a series of linked events. It is important to appreciate that a succession of seemingly small events can have a significant impact on someone.

Contacting the Union

The two main ways that members will contact the unions regarding concerns about harassment and bullying are through their local representative or one of the new Union Harassment Advisors.

Your Role

As a local representative or workplace contact your most important role is to provide a first port of call if a member wishes to contact their union about a concern at work.

Useful References

- » Chapter 5 of the Staff Handbook which outlines the FC's policy on equality, diversity and harassment & bullying.
- » Harassment and Bullying, an FC guide for staff gives more details about harassment and bullying and other support that you can get in the FC.
- » Staff Notice 9 outlines the FC's grievance procedures which can be used for making complaints on issues other than harassment and bullying.
- » PM4 details the FC's disciplinary procedures and how cases of potential harassment and bullying are investigated.

Further Help and Support

Dealing with individual personal cases is very important but can be complicated. However whether you are a local contact or a representative, there is a lot of support available to you and you are not expected to deal with situations that are beyond your knowledge or experience, or which place an unacceptable burden on your time.

If you need support or advice then in the first instance please speak to one of the union harassment advisors (details of whom are on the intranet); or speak to Sue Gillingwater in the FCTU office on 0131 314 6294.



Forestry Commission
Trade Unions

Union Harassment Advisors

The FCTU now has a network of 13 reps who have been specially trained to support members who are involved in cases of harassment and bullying or other potential conflict at work. Their role is to provide members and local reps with advice on;

- » specific situations,
- » options for taking a case forward, including guidance on the FC's procedures,
- » how to resolve a case to the member's satisfaction; and also to
- » provide members with support and representation in trying to resolve the complaint,
- » and identify very serious complaints and to ensure that these are dealt with correctly.

UHA's are happy to either work directly with members or provide guidance to local reps who are handling cases. You are welcome to contact any of the advisors either to get advice on a specific aspect of a case, or to transfer a case to them if it becomes too involved. (Always ensure that the member is happy for you to involve the UHA before you make contact). An up to date list of UHA contact details are available on the intranet.

Action Checklists

If a member contacts you about a problem at work:

- » Treat their complaint seriously.
- » Find a quiet space where you can listen to their concerns properly and in confidence. (In open plan offices it may be necessary to arrange a time for the meeting when private space is available). Listen sympathetically and be supportive.
- » Encourage the member to make and keep written notes of what has happened, including dates and times, who was involved, what was said, and how this made them feel.
- » Ask them what they would like done about the complaint – what would be a satisfactory outcome. (Do not promise an outcome unless you can guarantee delivering it).
- » Advise them that you would like to pass their complaint onto a UHA who can advise them on the options that might be available.
- » Give them a copy of the leaflet for members, or a copy of the FC leaflet.
- » STOP! - if you are unsure what to do at any time then GET ADVICE!

Possible Courses of Action

There is no right or wrong way to take a case forward, and each must be handled on its merits, depending on the specific circumstances and the member's wishes.

It is essential that members are encouraged to determine their own course of action, you can advise them of options but the final decision must be down to them. However if the member wishes to take a course of action which you are uncomfortable supporting, then you should seek advice from an UHA or a senior rep.

Some of the more common courses of action are:

- » For the member to speak or write to the alleged bully to make them aware of how their behaviour is affecting them, and to ask them to stop.
- » For the member to seek support from their line manager or head of unit, People Support or the FC's own Harassment Contact officers, details of whom are available from the intranet.
- » To lodge a formal complaint using the FC's grievance procedure laid out in Staff Handbook chapter 5.
- » If the complaint actually relates to an FJP or PMS assessment rather than to Harassment or Bullying, then there is an appeal route contained in the PMS guidance.
- » If the complaint involves poor performance or a trial period rather than to Harassment or Bullying, then there is an appeal route built into the poor performance procedures.

Non-Members

If you are approached by a non union member, then you should encourage them to join a union. However you should advise them that under most circumstances where an issue arose before they joined, the union will only provide guidance and not full representation. If they don't wish to join a union, then you should advise them to speak to a manager or one of the FC's Harassment Contact Officers.