

**Thames Valley (Oxford) Postgraduate Medical
Education Guidance for the Prevention,
Reporting and Resolution of Bullying and
Harassment at Work**

Updated July 2015 Jane Siddall AD for Educator Development

Supersedes NESC policy dignity at Work and the Management of
Harassment and Bullying
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Definitions:

Bullying and harassment can undermine an employee's dignity and create an intimidating and hostile working environment. HETV, incorporating Oxford Postgraduate Medical Education, is cognisant that behaviours which subject a trainee to fear, stress or anxiety, may place great strain on their personal and family life. This may potentially negatively affect their health, job performance and absenteeism rates and should be addressed by adequate measures within Trusts to prevent and resolve these issues.

Bullying may take the form of one or more of the following:

- Violence or the threat of violence
- Being unreasonably critical
- Belittling of efforts in front of others
- Threats
- Abuse
- Continuous setting unrealistic targets or deadlines
- Inappropriate or unreasonable withholding of information
- Spreading of malicious rumours
- Constant under-valuing of effort
- Pressurisation of staff to work in conditions which they feel are unsafe
- Taking action intended to undermine another member of staff
- Marginalisation of staff so that they are unable to carry out their jobs or make progress in their training
- Victimisation as a result of previous bullying investigations.
- Isolated incidences of such behaviour should not normally be interpreted as bullying, unless they are extreme or repeated.

Bullying IS NOT constructive criticism, adverse performance appraisal or unsatisfactory assessment, provided these assessments are based on evidence and carried out in a way that respects the dignity of the trainee. Tailoring of educational opportunities and clinical responsibilities to the progress of the individual is normal and appropriate, and should only be considered as bullying if it is without justification.

Undermining behaviours gradually and insidiously damage or weaken the individual. There's a fine line between giving constructive, objective and useful feedback (for example during and after a surgical procedure) and giving embarrassing, intimidating feedback which can lower the self-esteem of a trainee. What one person finds embarrassing, another may not.

Unacceptable behaviours which can undermine the individual include

- Persistent attempts to belittle and undermine work.
- Persistent and unjustified criticism and monitoring of work.
- Persistent attempts to humiliate individual in front of colleagues.
- Intimidating use of discipline or competence procedures.
- Undermining individual's personal integrity.
- Destructive innuendo and sarcasm.
- Verbal and non verbal threats.
- Making inappropriate jokes about individual.
- Persistent teasing.

- Physical violence.
- Violence to property.
- Withholding necessary information from individual.
- Freezing out, ignoring or excluding.
- Unreasonable refusal for applications for leave, training etc.
- Undue pressure to produce work.
- Setting impossible deadlines.
- Shifting goalposts without telling individual.
- Constant undervaluing of individual's efforts.
- Persistent attempts to demoralise individual.
- Removal of areas of responsibility without consultation.
- Discrimination on racial, gender or sexual grounds.
- Unwelcome sexual advances.

Harassment in a training context is defined as:

- Unwanted behaviour, which staff find intimidating, upsetting, embarrassing, humiliating or offensive.
- Persistent behaviour or behaviour which occurs on a single occasion.
- Intentional or unintentional behaviour on the part of the offender which impacts the recipient.
- Harassment can take many forms, ranging from acts of violence to excessive rudeness, or more subtle forms, such as deliberately ignoring someone at work.
- There is legislation to cover sexual and racial harassment, described in the Equality and Diversity policy

Principles

- HETV is responsible for managing postgraduate education and training for doctors and dentists. It is committed to the eradication of bullying at work and supports trainees' right to work in an atmosphere which is free from any kind of harassment by the trainers, peers or others involved in the training or working environment.
- HETV is also committed to Equal Opportunities and the Health, Safety and well-being of employees, as detailed in the Equality Act, 2010 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.
- The PGME of HETV carries out their responsibility through educational contracts with NHS Trusts, who employ doctors and dentists in training and also via consultants and other staff who train, supervise and work with them. In addressing complaints of bullying or harassment, Oxford Postgraduate Medical Education is mindful of the complex relationships between employers, trainers, trainees and Oxford Postgraduate Medical Education.
- The PGME of HETV monitors instances of bullying and harassment within Trusts and Schools through the annual GMC trainee survey, which all trainees are encouraged to complete. Trusts and Schools are expected to work towards the prevention and resolution of instances of bullying via reporting their plans for addressing these issues in their annual reports
- The trainee should use the information in this document as a guide to the position of HETV with regard to bullying and harassment

Complaints Process

Trainees are employed by the Trust or other organisation where they work as a doctor (such as local government, general practice etc) and these organisations will have a local policy for the reporting of bullying and harassment, which should be employed in the first instance.

Trainees can and should seek support from their clinical or educational supervisor during this process: if this trainer is the 'problem' please approach your Training Programme Director, and the Director of Medical Education if working in a Trust.

When a trainee makes a complaint of bullying or harassment to an employee of HETV, it will be treated seriously. The trainee will be directed to the employing Trust's Bullying and Harassment Policy and to the Trust's Human Resources team (where appropriate).

HETV's Postgraduate Medical Education department will seek to be supportive of the trainee but also mindful that it is appropriate for the Trust, as the employer, to address the concerns raised.

In 2011, the Oxford School of O&G adopted the following **Charter**, originally developed in the Northern School of O&G by Mr D Cruikshank, with permission. It sets out principles of good practice and behaviours for both trainees and trainers. These values apply across the whole of HETV.

Trainer Principles:

Please note – 'trainers' in this document include both educational and clinical supervisors as well as middle grade doctors and other staff with seniority who have a role in training.

- Provide support, guidance and fair treatment to trainees irrespective of gender, race or any other aspect of trainee background.
- Avoid demonstrating favouritism to the exclusion of individuals or groups, allowing all trainees equity of access to the appropriate training opportunities.
- Undertaking roles of educational and clinical supervision, developing and maintaining skills needed for these roles.
- Offer prompt, timely and constructive feedback that links feedback to trainee performance.
- Work with trainees in a constructive and professional manner.
- Avoid giving feedback in such a way as to belittle, humiliate, threaten or undermine.
- Provide feedback which highlights observed behaviours and helps the trainee to find alternative strategies to overcome problems.
- Highlight areas of good performance that help trainees envisage what they are capable of as well as dealing with problem areas.
- Listen to concerns expressed by trainees in relation to working conditions to ensure patient and staff safety.
- Avoid behaviour that intimidates or bullies trainees, seeking to deal with problems in an appropriate manner for professional adult practice which aims to encourage positive approaches to practice.
- Examples of behaviours which are inappropriate include shouting, swearing and public outbursts about trainee performance.

Trainee Principles:

- Ensure you are professional in your approach to clinical practice.
- Be timely and efficient in your clinical roles.
- Engage fully with the area of Obstetrics and Gynaecology practice you are working in at the time to ensure that you make the most of the opportunities to broaden your experience and knowledge.
- Engage in ongoing professional development on a regular basis.
- Engage in clinical audit and governance activity.
- Contribute to critical incident assessments (both formally if needed and via your learning portfolio) in regard to your own practice.
- Engage proactively in your own educational supervision, taking responsibility for learning about the requirements for assessment and maintaining an up to date record of your training progress.
- Contribute to the training of undergraduate students, postgraduate trainees in medicine and other health care professionals.
- Find out how to fulfil the requirements of your position and discuss any limiting factors with more senior personnel in your department if problems arise.
- Seek out feedback on your performance, by critically appraising your own performance and highlighting areas you are seeking to improve.
- Avoid engaging in behaviour that seeks to intimidate, undermine or belittle colleagues during their training.
- Ensure you are fair in your dealings with colleagues over training opportunities and service responsibilities.
- Take note of the guidance for trainers to ensure that you follow the same principles in your dealings with other trainees and staff you work with.