

IDENTIFYING WORKPLACE BULLYING

There are lots of useful resources which provide comprehensive information on workplace bullying, notably: [WorkSafe NZ Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying Best Practice Guidelines \(2014\)](#). This online resource includes information on what bullying is and isn't, flowcharts, advice for employers, process steps for managing complaints, tools, examples and case studies.

These guidelines provide a summary of what workplace bullying is and isn't, and include links to useful resources for further information.

What are bullying behaviours?

Bullying is formally defined in the policy. Some bullying behaviours are more obvious, like personal attacks and put downs (called personal or "direct" bullying behaviours). Some are more subtle and are more task related (called task-related or "indirect" bullying behaviours) which attempt to undermine credibility, performance and/or confidence. Examples are available in section 01, Table 1 in the [WorkSafe NZ guidelines](#).

Bullying behaviour is ongoing and repeated. A single isolated incident of unreasonable behaviour is not considered workplace bullying.

Am I being bullied?

You don't like what's happening to you at work – but is it bullying?

WorkSafe NZ has a specific flowchart and an online questionnaire: [Am I Being Bullied?](#) - to help you explore this issue and answer that question.

The WorkSafe NZ 'Am I being bullied' flow chart notes: Calling it bullying at the start is likely to make resolution difficult. If you are wrong, your credibility could suffer, so work through the initial identifying stage carefully – if it really is bullying, that will emerge. Describing the behaviour should be enough.

What is NOT bullying behaviour?

It is the job of your people leader to direct your work and manage your performance, so the nature of that relationship means they will be assigning you work and giving you direction and feedback. Reasonable instructions or actions taken by an employer are not bullying. You might not want to do the piece of work or agree with your leader's feedback or decision, but if it is reasonable, then it is not bullying.

Generally one instance of unpleasant or unreasonable behaviour, is not bullying. It is not bullying if the behaviour does not affect you, or has no negative impact, or doesn't create a health and safety risk.

Who could be a bully?

While a bully will commonly be in a position of authority or power over the victim, that is not always the case. Bullying may occur between individuals at every level in an organisation, including between colleagues, and employees bullying a leader. Workplace bullying can be directed at an individual or group, and be carried out by one or more people. The bullying may be conscious or the person may be unaware their behaviour could constitute bullying.

What if I witness bullying?

If you witness behaviour which you believe is inappropriate and could constitute bullying, you should raise your concerns with the person demonstrating the behaviour, if you feel comfortable doing so. This proactive approach may stop the behaviour being repeated or becoming more serious.

If the behaviour is serious, or you don't feel you can raise it directly, you can use the [reporting wrongdoing online form](#). (*internal link to form*)

What options do I have to address bullying behaviour?

See the 'Making a complaint' guidelines. (Topic 4)