



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

bullying & harassment

what you need to know



S T O P
BULLYING & HARASSMENT



the right to respect

a code of conduct

Everyone in the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their rank, rate or grade.

All personnel should make sure that they:

- ◆ **Don't** bully or harass anybody.
- ◆ **Do** challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- ◆ **Do** support somebody who feels they have been bullied or harassed.
- ◆ **Do** report inappropriate behaviour, whether or not it is aimed at them.

the message

Bullying and harassment damage individuals, teams, and operational effectiveness. They undermine our values and standards too. Whatever form they take, they will **not** be tolerated.

If you are unhappy about the way that you are being treated, then you **can** do something about it. This booklet will help you to do so.

Full details on the MOD's Harassment Complaints Procedures can be found in JSP 763, which is available on the Defence Intranet.



what are bullying and harassment?

what is harassment?

"Harassment" is unwanted behaviour that violates a person's dignity or creates an offensive or degrading environment for them. It may make them feel humiliated, distressed or uncomfortable and affect their health and confidence. It is no excuse to claim the behaviour was meant as a joke: harassment depends on the impact it has, not the intention behind it. It is often based on somebody's gender, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

examples of harassment are:

- ◆ Making derogatory or obscene remarks, jokes, or innuendos.
- ◆ Name-calling or ridiculing someone – e.g. making fun of the way they look, speak, or practice their religion.
- ◆ Unwelcome sexual attention – e.g. touching or leering.
- ◆ Displaying or distributing offensive material such as pornography.

what is bullying?

"Bullying" describes behaviour that creates a threatening or hostile environment for a person, which can destroy their self-esteem, and make their life miserable. Bullying often involves a misuse of power or position and can continue over a long period.

examples of bullying are:

- ◆ Physical abuse or intimidation, including 'initiation' rituals.
- ◆ Verbal abuse and humiliation, e.g. shouting or swearing at someone, or spreading rumours about them.
- ◆ Deliberately setting unachievable objectives.
- ◆ Cutting someone out of group activities.
- ◆ Repeatedly blocking applications for leave, training, promotion, etc. without good reason.



sorting things out

If you believe that you are being harassed or bullied, then you have the right to complain about it. MOD policy is clear: bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

- ◆ **Don't** worry – you don't have to deal with this alone
- ◆ **Do** share the problem – talk to a friend or colleague.
- ◆ **Do** get informed advice

Getting informed advice does not mean that you are making a Formal Complaint. In fact, the following people can help you to sort things out without making a fuss:

1. your boss or line manager;
2. your Service Equality and Diversity Adviser (EDA);
3. the civilian PPPA (from April 2007);
4. your Chaplain/Padre/Welfare Officer;
5. your Trade Union representative.

the informal approach

You don't have to make a big deal out of raising your concerns, if you don't want to. Many people prefer to try to sort things out informally.

If you feel you can, then approach the person involved, write to them or e-mail them. Make it clear how their behaviour is affecting you, and ask them to stop it. You might want to ask a friend to help or accompany you.



sorting things out

making a formal complaint

You can always make a Formal Complaint if you want to. You might choose to do this if you are suffering from very bad or repeated bullying/harassment, or if you tried the informal approach but it was unsuccessful.

A Formal Complaint must be a letter written to your CO/Senior Line Manager, and signed by you. It should be sent within 3 months of the incident complained about, or of the latest incident if there has been more than one.

a formal complaint should include:

- ◆ Your name, rank/grade, and contact details.
- ◆ The name, rank/grade, and unit/department of the person(s) you are complaining about.
- ◆ As much detail as possible about the incident(s) that upset you, including the date(s) they happened and if there were any witnesses.
- ◆ The effect that the incident(s) had on you.
- ◆ What outcome or redress you are looking for with your complaint.

Your CO/Senior Line Manager can arrange for someone to assist you in writing the complaint and to help you throughout the process that follows.



the formal complaint process

Once you have made a Formal Complaint, the person you have complained about will be informed. However, they will be told **not** to approach you on the matter.

A senior figure known as the **Deciding Officer** will be assigned to deal with your complaint. This will usually be your CO/Senior Line Manager. The Deciding Officer will interview you and the person(s) you have complained about. If they do not admit to harassing or bullying you, then there will have to be an investigation into what happened.

The Deciding Officer will consider the findings of the investigation and decide what to do. If your complaint is upheld, then appropriate action will be taken against the person(s) you complain about, which may include disciplinary or administrative action. False allegations will not be upheld.

You and the person(s) you complained about will be informed of the outcome. If you are still unhappy, then you can appeal against the decision or ask for it to be reviewed by a higher authority.

Some complaints may ultimately be eligible for a hearing at an Employment Tribunal (see www.employmenttribunals.gov.uk for more information).

has someone made a complaint against you?



If somebody has made a complaint of bullying or harassment against you:

- ◆ **Do** stay calm and cooperate
- ◆ **Don't** try to approach them – this might appear intimidating
- ◆ **Do** treat their feelings with respect
- ◆ **Don't** discuss the matter with any potential witnesses
- ◆ **Do** share your concerns – talk to a friend or work colleague
- ◆ **Do** get informed advice.

You can get help from the following people:

1. your boss or line manager;
2. your Service Equality and Diversity Adviser (EDA);
3. the civilian PPPA (from April 2007);
4. your Chaplain/Padre/Welfare Officer;
5. your Trade Union representative.

In many cases, the person making the complaint will try to resolve things informally. They may only want you to understand why they are upset and to stop doing whatever behaviour caused them offence. If a Formal Complaint is made against you, then you should treat this seriously. The information on the opposite page will help you to understand the process of what happens next.

sources of advice

If you are unhappy about the way you are being treated; would like guidance on the complaints procedures; or have any other concerns, then you can get informed advice from the following people:

1. your boss or line manager;
2. your Service Equality and Diversity Adviser (EDA);
3. the civilian PPPA (from April 2007);
4. your Chaplain/Padre/Welfare Officer;
5. your Trade Union representative.

The following support lines can also provide assistance and advice to you or your family if you wish to discuss an issue in confidence.

Confidential Support Line (for Service personnel)

UK	0800 731 4880	(freephone)
Overseas	+44 1980 630854	(call back option)

Open 1030-2230 every day. At other times, there will be an answer machine.

Occupational Welfare Service (for civilian personnel)

UK	0800 345 7047	(freephone)
Overseas	+44 1225 882424	

Open 0830-1630 Monday to Friday. At other times, call 0207 218 6002.

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