

Handout 1

What is the difference between Harassment and Bullying?

Harassment and bullying **both** involve behaviour which harms, intimidates, threatens, victimises, undermines, offends, degrades or humiliates.

Harassment is linked to anti-discrimination laws and so will focus on gender, race, ethnic background, colour, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability. It may be a single incident or a series of incidents.

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect and by one or more persons which undermines an individual's right to dignity and is not linked to a particular characteristic.

Below is information taken from "Bully on line" developed by Tim Field – who was a prominent anti-bullying campaigner.

Harassment	Workplace bullying
Has a strong physical component, e.g. contact and touch, intrusion into personal space and possessions, etc.	Almost exclusively psychological (e.g. criticism), but may become physical
Tends to focus on the individual because of a characteristic (e.g. female, black, disabled, etc.)	Anyone will do, especially if they are competent, popular, vulnerable.
Usually linked to sex, race, prejudice, discrimination etc. – usually has a clear focus	Usually discrimination on the basis of competence – bully may be envious
May consist of a single incident or many incidents	Rarely a single incident – tends to be an accumulation of many small incidents – which in isolation and out of context may appear trivial
The person being harassed usually realises immediately they are being harassed	The person being bullied may not realise for some time what is happening
Everyone can recognise harassment, especially if there's a physical assault,	Few people recognise bullying
Often revealed through use of recognised offensive vocabulary	Tends to fixate on trivial criticisms and false allegations of under performance; offensive words rarely are used
Often has an element of possession e.g. stalking	Begins with control / subjugation
Often done for bravado, peer approval	Tends to be more secretive
Can occur in and outside the workplace	Tends to occur at work
Harasser perceives target as an easy challenge	Bully perceives target as a threat
Harasser often lacks self discipline	Bully is often driven by envy
Harasser often has specific inadequacies	Bully often has many inadequacies – interpersonal / behavioural

