

Raising Concerns: Bullying and Harassment

Support and guidance for trainees

Bullying and Harassment

As a trainee it is possible that you may become concerned about the environment you are working within. This may be a patient safety issue or clinical incident which requires review, reporting and escalation to senior clinical staff (please refer to Serious Adverse Incident leaflet). There may be other concerns such as undermining and bullying, or sexual harassment.

Bullying and harassment is 'any unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended.' It can be in any format (via email, text, social media, phone or in person) and can happen between individuals or groups. Bullying not only has a negative impact on those it directly impacts but also creates a poor working environment, tensions between members of staff and low morale. If you decide to take action it is often most helpful if you can do so promptly and it is often best to try and address the issue informally if possible. If this fails it is important that you discuss this with someone who may be able to help resolve the issue, for example your supervisor or consultant.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. The purpose of sexual harassment is to violate the dignity of the person to create an intimidating, or hostile environment for them.

Sexual harassment includes sexual assault, displaying of pornographic images, written or verbal comments of a sexual nature, emails or communications with content of a sexual nature. Sexual assault is a criminal matter and if this occurs it should be reported to the police.

If you have experienced sexual harassment it is important this is raised with your supervisor or consultant or someone senior with whom you feel comfortable speaking. Employees should not have to work in an environment in which they feel threatened or uncomfortable in.

It can feel challenging to raise concerns but ultimately if concerns are not addressed the culture will not change or improve. Employees should not have to work in an environment that they feel threatened or uncomfortable in. To ensure that we are providing the best care to patients we must promote an environment and culture that is open and supportive. Given its values, this is especially true for the HSC.

Resources

Each Trust will have its' own policy on how to raise concerns. Most Trusts will have methods by which to raise concerns about clinical care of patients through online incident reporting which you should familiarise yourself with. The whistleblowing/raising concerns policies for each of the Trusts can be accessed via the NIMDTA website www.nimmdta.gov.uk/professional-support/trainee-information-booklets

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Whistleblowing Policy

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Harassment Policy

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Openness Training

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Southern Trust Health and Social Care Trust

Western Health and Social Care Trust: Harassment Policy

As a NIMDTA trainee it is important that you discuss any concerns you have about patient safety or undermining and bullying with your clinical supervisor, educational supervisor, Trust Director of Medical Education, Training Programme Director or Head of School.

If you need further support please contact the Professional Support Unit (PSU) at NIMDTA.

Additional Resources

<http://www.nimmdta.gov.uk/professional-support/>

<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1864>

<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6078>