Destructive conflict and bullying at work

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0. SUMMARY

♦ Based on responses from 5,288 individuals from more than 70 different organisations across occupational life, which altogether employ just under one million people, this study has made a number of discoveries:

♦ One in ten people (10.6%) reported having been bullied within the last six months, rising to one in four (24.7) when the period was extended to the last five years. Almost one in two (46.5%) had witnessed bullying taking place within the last five years.

♦ Bullying was found to be particular prevalent in the following sectors: prison service (16.2%), post and telecommunications (16.2%), teaching (15.6%) and the dance profession (14.1%).

♦ A greater proportion of women was bullied compared with men, 11.4% for women as opposed to 9.9% for men within the last six months. This difference increased when the period was extended to five years (27.7% for women against 22.0% for men).

♦ Respondents in supervisory or management positions were as likely to be bullied as those without managerial responsibility.

♦ Managers or persons in superior formal positions were reported as perpetrators in 74.7% of incidences. The equivalent figures were 36.7% for peers or colleagues, 6.7% for subordinates and 7.8% for clients.

♦ Bullying is a drawn-out affair, which for two out of three targets of bullying (66.8%) had gone on for more than a year and for approximately 40% of respondents for more than two years.

♦ The most commonly experienced negative behaviour at work was 'someone withholding information which affects your performance' (54.0% occasionally and 13.9% weekly or daily) followed by 'being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines' (49.3% and 7.8% respectively).

♦ Men were exposed to more negative acts than women, younger respondents more than older ones and respondents of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin more than respondents from a white ethnic background.

♦ Bullying was found to be identified with particular styles of management. Management styles which are divisive or which use punishment unrelated to the behaviour of the subordinate were particularly associated with bullying.

- Bullying was found to be particularly associated with poor mental health and low organisational satisfaction. However, bullying was also associated with a greater propensity to leave the organisation, higher sickness absenteeism, lower productivity and organisational commitment than those who were not bullied.

- The negative effects of bullying appeared to extend beyond those currently bullied to include also those who were bullied in the past and for those who witnessed bullying taking place.

- Exposure to negative behaviours alone, independently of whether the experience was labelled as bullying or not, was associated with negative individual and organisational outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report incorporates the results of the first nation-wide survey of workplace bullying to be undertaken across a number of occupations and industrial sectors in Britain. With this report it is possible to establish a comprehensive and reliable picture of the problem and its effects. For individuals as well as organisations these results should be welcomed, as they should provide sufficient evidence to put the issue of workplace bullying firmly on the organisational agenda. Moreover, by studying the results from the present study and other results previously available, organisations may be able to put in place mechanisms to prevent and reduce the prevalence of the problem.

Acknowledgement

Background

Many studies, in Britain and abroad, have in recent years identified bullying at work to be an occupational problem of significant magnitude (Rayner, 1997; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Previous studies have also suggested that bullying and persistent exposure to negative behaviours at work is likely to manifest itself in mental and physical health problems (Einarsen & Hellesoy, 1998; Keashly, Hunter & Harvey, 1997). It has also been suggested that large sums of money may be wasted due to destructive conflict and bullying at work. Increased sickness absenteeism may be one such cost factor, reduced productivity resulting from lower morale, reduced commitment, motivation and performance another. It is recognised that many targets of bullying behaviours may decide to leave their job due to their treatment (UNISON, 1997). Moreover, the increased propensity to leave reported by targets of bullying is, however, not limited to those directly affected by bullying but seems to extend to bystanders or those who have witnessed bullying taking place (Rayner, 1999). Recently we have also seen an increasing number of litigation cases where bullying has been identified as the main source of complaint. Not only may such cases lead to additional cost to an organisation; organisational morale are public relations are also likely to suffer as a result.

No previous study undertaken in Britain has investigated the problem of bullying across industrial sectors and occupational groups. In order to provide a reliable picture of the scale and severity of workplace bullying in Britain and its effects on individuals and organisations a research protocol was developed and agreed with British Occupational Health Research Foundation's (BOHRF) Scientific Committee.

Definitions

In order to be able to measure the problem we need a definition. However, defining the concept of 'workplace bullying' has created considerable problems for researchers and there is no consensus on this issue. (For a discussion see Hoel et al, 1999). For the purpose of the present study we have adopted a definition used by Einarsen and Skogstad (1996).

> *"We define bullying as a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. We will not refer to a one-off incident as bullying."*

This definition emphasises the negative, persistent and long-term nature of the experience of bullying. Whilst it may be unpleasant to be on the receiving end of someone's occasional aggressive behaviour, such behaviour would normally be considered to fall outside the definition. An exception here would be intimidation of such a severe nature that the target is left in a situation of permanent uncertainty or fear. Physical violence or the *threat* of physical violence may serve as an example here. The above definition also points to a perceived imbalance of power between the protagonists. However, it is worth emphasising that power in this context may be drawn from a formal position within the organisational hierarchy or from more informal sources. Personal contacts, organisational standing and experience, as well as knowledge of the target's potential vulnerability or 'weak points', may all qualify as sources of informal power.

2. SURVEY PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLE

In order to provide the researchers with advice throughout the study as well as aiding the process of gaining access to a large number of organisations, a Study Advisory Board was established. The Chairman of the Advisory Board was Lord Monkswell, Sponsor of the 'Dignity at Work Act'. In addition to representatives from the CBI and the TUC, the Advisory Board comprised individuals representing leading private companies, and professional associations as well as voluntary organisations particularly concerned with the issue of workplace bullying, notably the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the Andrea Adams Trust. (Appendix 1).

To identify a broad and representative sample a considerable amount of effort was put into negotiating access to organisations and their members. Out of approximately 200 organisations, 70 responded positively to our request. These organisations, whose participation has made this study possible, cover a wide range of occupations and industries spanning the public, the private as well as the voluntary sector. Taken together these organisations have just under one million employees.

A procedure for obtaining a representative and random sample, taking into account possible constraints of a practical nature, was developed by the

researchers and applied by the participating organisations' personnel/human resources departments

More than 5,300 questionnaires were returned giving a total response-rate of 43.4%. When incomplete questionnaires and those reaching the researchers after the deadline were deducted from this number, 5,288 were retained for analysis. In general the questionnaires were completed in an acceptable manner, with little data missing for any variable.

Table 1: Survey sample

Area of work	Total sample	Returned quests.	Response rate %
NHS Trusts	1,069	535	50.5
Post/Telecom.	1,000	273	27.3
Civil Service	**250**	**141**	**56.4**
Higher Educ.	1,072	487	45.4
Teaching	1,000	426	42.6
Local Authority	924	388	42.0
Manufact./Eng.	177	82	46.3
Manufact. IT	475	189	39.8
Brewing	160	68	42.5
Pharmaceutic	350	197	56,3
(Total manufct.)	(1,162)	(536)	(46.1)
Hotels	493	163	32.7
Retailing	855	354	41.4
Banking	820	262	32.0
Voluntary Org.	317	123	38.8
Dance	196	85	43.4
Police Service	1,000	483	48.3
Fire Service	1,167	520	44,6
Prison	1,000	471	47,1
Total sample	12,350	5,288	42.8%

These figures conceal large variations across sub-samples (occupational groups/industrial sectors).

The sample details presented below show that men were slightly over-represented. The age-distribution generally follows a normal distribution curve with the largest group of respondents belonging to the 35-44 age group. Less than 3% reported themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. Most of the respondents held a full-time, permanent contract and over 60% had been in their present job for more than 4 years. Compared to industry in general, people in professional or managerial jobs appear to be over-represented.

Sample details

The respondents were asked to '*tick the box that best describe yourself or your situation*'. (Sample detail for the Civil Service sample is added in brackets).

1. *Sex*
Male:	52.4%	(65.2&)
Female:	47.6%	(34.8%)

2. *How old are you*
16 – 24	5.2%	(2.8%)
25 – 34	24.1%	(15.6%)
35 – 44	36.3%	(36.2%)
45 – 54	26.4%	(35.5%)
55 – 70	7.9%	(9.9%)

3. *Please state your ethnicity*
White:	97.1%	97.2%
Afro-Caribbean	0.7%	0.7%
Asian	1.1%	2.1%
Chinese	0.2%	
Other	0.8%	

4. *You are contracted to work*
Full-time	84.9%	87.9%
Part-time	15.1%	12.1%

5. ***Your contract is** (Uniformed services excluded):
Permanent	92.4%	(96.4%)
Short-term	6.8%	(3.6%)
Sub-contracted	0.8%	

6. ****How would you describe your job?** (Uniformed services excluded)
Manual	13.8%	(2.8%)
Clerical/admin	21.3%	(7.1%)
Technical	7.3%	(5.0%)
Professional/Managerial	47.6%	(83.0%)
Other	10.1%	(2.1%)

7. **At which level in the organisation do you work?*
Worker (without supervisory responsibility)	43.6%	(16.4%)
Foreman/woman/supervisor	14.9%	(2.9%)
Middle management	21.1%	(36.4%)
Senior management	7.3%	(30.7%)
Other	13.1%	(13.6%)

8.   *How long have you been in your present job?
        Under 1 year   12.7%   (12.1%)
        1-3 years   23.8%   (22.9%)
        4-5 years   9.9%   (9.3%)
        More than 5 years   55.2%   (55.7%)

*   Police excluded
** Police and fire service excluded
***Police, fire and prison service excluded

3. PREVALENCE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

In order to establish the scale and intensity of the bullying experience we
provided the participants with a definition of workplace bullying often used in
bullying studies (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). This definition emphasises the
negative, persistent and long-term nature of the experience of bullying.

To reduce the influence of competing perceptions/personal definitions of
bullying), the above definition was immediately followed by the following
question:
        '*Using the above definition, please state whether you have been bullied
        at work over the last six months'*.

A total of 553 people out of the 5,288 respondents report that they had been
bullied over the last six months. As far as the persistency of their experience
is concerned, the respondents fell into the following categories:

Table 2: 'Have you been bullied at work over the last six months?'
(Civil Service sample in brackets)

No	Yes, very rarely	Yes, now & then	Yes, several times a month	Yes, several times a week	Yes, almost daily
89.4% **(90.1%)**	1.9% **(4.3%)**	6.2% **(2.8%)**	1.0% **(1.4%)**	0.8% **(1.4%)**	0.6% **(0%)**

From this we can conclude that **10.6%** or approximately **one in ten people**
have been bullied in the last six months. It should be noted that despite
emphasising the persistent and long term nature of the experience, 1.9%
ticked the 'very rarely' box, suggesting that people's own definition of bullying
is not necessarily in line with the one provided by the researchers.

In order to make a distinction between occasional and frequent experience of
bullying we re-coded the responses with 'very rarely', 'now & then' and
'several times a month' making up the 'occasional group and 'several times a
week' and 'almost daily' forming the 'frequently' group.

Table below shows that bullying varies greatly between sectors and occupations with employees within the prison service, post and telecommunications, school-teaching and the dance profession being most at risk. The fact that both pharmaceutical and IT industries have a considerable number of people reporting that they have been bullied within the last 5 year period suggests that these sectors are far from 'bully-proof'.

Table 3 also seems to suggest that bullying is more prevalent in the public than in the private sector. Again we will argue that care needs to be demonstrated when the figures are interpreted. In a nutshell, the samples of the public sector were generally larger and more representative than samples drawn from the private sector.

Table 3: Prevalence of bullying - per sector

Sector	Not bullied		Occasionally Bullied		Regularly bullied		Total bullied	Sector
	n	%	n	%	n	%	%	n
Post/Telecom.	222	83.8	30	11.3	13	4.9	16.2	265
Prison	389	83.8	68	14.7	7	1.5	16.2	464
Teaching	356	84.4	63	14.9	3	0.7	15.6	422
Other	12	85.7	1	7.1	1	7.1	14.3	14
Dance	73	85.9	12	14.1	0	0.0	14.1	85
Police Service	423	87.9	47	9.8	11	2.3	12.1	481
Voluntary Org.	108	89.3	12	9.9	1	0.8	10.7	121
Banking	228	88.4	27	10.5	3	1.2	11.6	258
NHS Trusts	474	89.4	44	8.3	12	2.3	10.6	530
Local Authority	342	89.5	39	10.2	1	0.3	10.5	382
Civil Service	**127**	**90.1**	**12**	**8.5**	**2**	**1.4**	**9.9**	**141**
Fire Service	469	91.1	40	7.8	6	1.2	8.9	515
Hotel industry	149	92.5	11	6.8	1	0.6	7.5	161
Higher Educ.	448	92.8	29	6.0	6	1.2	7.2	483
Retailing	327	93.2	20	5.7	4	1.1	6.8	351
Manufacturing	513	95.9	21	3.9	1	0.2	4.1	535

Table 4: 'Current, past and 'indirect bullying'

Sector	Bullied last 6 months (%)	Bullied last 5 years (%)	Witnessed bullying last 5 years (%)
Post/Telecom.	16.2	27.9	50.4
Prison	16.2	32.1	64.0
Teaching	15.6	35.9	57.7
Other	14.3	20.0	40.0
Dance	14.1	29.6	50.0
Police Service	12.1	29.2	46.4
Banking	11.6	24.6	39.6
Voluntary Org.	10.7	26.7	55.6
NHS Trusts	10.6	25.2	47.2
Local Authority	10.5	21.4	42.7
Civil Service	**9.9**	**25.7**	**47.1**
Fire Service	8.9	20.0	43.2
Hotel industry	7.5	16.8	46.3
High. Educ.	7.2	21.3	42.8
Retailing	6.8	17.6	33.7
Manufacturing	4.1	19.2	39.0
Totals	10.6	24.7	46.5

When we extended the experience period to 'the last five years', a total of 24.7% or approximately a quarter of the respondents reported that they had been bullied (See table 4 above). It was also revealed as many as 46.5% had observed or witnessed bullying taking place. On the basis of these figures we can with a relatively large degree of certainty conclude that the majority of the workforce at some time during their working career are likely to experience bullying, either directly, or indirectly by witnessing bullying.

How does this result compare with other studies?

Table 5: Comparison of prevalence data

Present study (all bullied)	UK, UNISON (1997)	TUC (1998)	Norway, Einarsen & Skogstad (1996)
10.6%	18.3%	11%	8.6%

A direct comparison is often difficult to make as workplace bullying is frequently measured in different ways. Where results are comparable, (e.g. Einarsen and Skogstad's large scale study) the figures show that bullying is more prevalent in Britain than, say, Norway, though not to a dramatic extent.

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF BULLYING – TARGETS AND PERPETRATORS

Gender

A greater proportion of women (11.4%) reported being bullied compared to men (9.9%). However, this difference was not significant (p=0.073). **The similar figures for the Civil Service were 6.5% for men and 16.3% for women (p=0.064).** Only in a few industries can we say that women are over-represented among targets, notably in higher education, the fire service and the voluntary sector. However, when the time period was extended to include experience of bullying within the last five years, the difference between men and women increased to 27% for women reporting being bullied as opposed to 22% of men. This difference was statistically significant (p<0.001).

Age differences

Age seems to be of little importance with regard to the prevalence of bullying. However, younger employees and those in the middle-age band are slightly more at risk than older employees. Again, the differences between the groups increased when we applied the same comparison to experience over the last five years. The difference between the group least at risk, those between 55-70 years of age and those most at risk, those between 35-44 years of age now increased to 17.9% for the 55-70 group as opposed to 26.5% for the 35-44 group (p<0.001).

Table 6: Age differences in exposure to bullying

16-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-70 years	All
12.4%	9.5%	11.5%	10.7%	8.1%	10.6%

Ethnicity

Respondents with an Asian ethnic background were far more likely to be bullied than those who considered themselves white, with 19.6% of Asian respondents being bullied as opposed to 10.5% of whites. By contrast, no respondents with a Chinese background considered themselves as being bullied whilst the prevalence rate for Afro-Caribbean respondents was 5.4%.

Organisational level of targets

Since power is an important feature of bullying it was expected that bullying would be most prevalent among groups with relatively little formal power. The fact that bullying appears to be equally likely to affect a manager as someone without managerial responsibility, therefore, came as a surprise to the researchers. However, with growing pressures applied to all levels of the organisation, combined with greater accountability and responsibility given to middle line-management, stress and frustration may increasingly be taken out on subordinates. A managerial training deficit in some organisations may also account for some of the explanation.

Table 7: Targets of bullying at various organisational levels (%)

Workers (no Supervisory. Responsibility	Foreman/ Woman	Middle Management	Senior Management	Other
10%	9%	11%	9%	11%

Table 8: Organisational level of target - per sector

Area of work	Workers	Forman/ woman	Middle manager	Senior Manager	Other
NHS Trusts	9.4	10.9	14.7	7.4	9.8
Post/Telecom.	19.5	8.3	0.0	0.0	8.7
Civil Service	**12.9**	**0.0**	**7.8**	**9.2**	**15.8**
Higher Educ.	4.8	13.3	8.7	7.7	5.9
Teaching	13.5	18.1	12.2	16.6	22.6
Local Authority	8.9	8.9	14.3	11.2	12.5
Total Manufct.	4.8	4.3	3.8	5.6	1.6
Hotel industry	9.4	2.8	11.7	0.0	15.4
Retailing	5.6	4.0	8.7	7.7	13.2
Area of work	**Workers**	**Forman/ woman**	**Middle manager**	**Senior Manager**	**Other**
Banking	9.8	10.0	14.3	10.5	10.6
Voluntary Org.	10.3	7.1	17.3	0.0	11.8
Dance	18.5	33.3	17.6	0.0	10.3
Police Service	12.2	10.6	19.5	0.0	N/A
Fire Service	10.2	9.3	5.3	5.6	16.7
Prison	14.8	19.4	15.5	18.5	0.0

Organisational level of perpetrators

In line with previous studies of bullying in the UK individuals in a superior organisational position are identified as perpetrators in a majority of incidents (Rayner, 1997; UNISON, 1998). With managers making up such a large part of the perpetrators, the onus for bringing about change, therefore, seems to be on management in particular.

Table 9: Organisational level of perpetrator

Manager(s)	Colleague(s)	Subordinate(s)	Client(s)
74.7%	36.7%	6.7%	7.8%

However, a substantial number of respondents identify a colleague as the perpetrator. From previous studies of the problem we know that it is very difficult to remain neutral in cases of bullying. It is, therefore, possible that colleagues, who fear becoming targeted themselves, may decide not to get involved and may be seen as taking the side of the bully in the eyes of the target. For the same reason some individuals may play an active part in the bullying. However, it is beyond doubt, that in some incidents people resort to bullying behaviour or behaviour, which may be construed as bullying against a co-worker. Whatever the rationale behind such behaviour, unions and staff associations need to adopt a clear position against such behaviour. Not surprisingly clients are identified as an important perpetrator group in some sectors. The fact that more than one person may be perceived as being the culprit also explains why the figures do not add up to 100%.

Table 10 : Organisation level of perpetrators – per sector

Area of work	Supervisor/ Manager	Colleague	Subordinate	Client, student etc
NHS Trusts	64.3	53.6	7.1	10.7
Post/Telecom.	79.1	37.2	2.3	2.3
Civil Service	**71.4**	**35.7**	**7.1**	**0.0**
Higher Education	62.9	51.4	11.4	2.9
Teaching	86.4	21.2	3.0	18.2
Local Authority	67.5	35.0	5.0	10.0
Total Manufct.	81.8	18.2	0.0	0.0
Hotel industry	58.3	41.7	0.0	16.7
Retailing	70.8	33.3	4.2	20.8
Banking	80.0	36.7	13.3	6.7
Voluntary Org.	69.2	38.5	23.1	15.4
Dance	75.0	33.3	8.3	0.0
Police Service	81.0	34.5	3.4	1.7
Fire Service	76.1	30.4	15.2	2.2
Prison Service	74.7	42.7	6.7	8.0

Numbers and sex of perpetrator

Table 11: Number and sex of perpetrator

Men bullied by other men exclusively	62%	Women bullied by other women exclusively	367
Men bullied by women exclusively	9%	Women bullied by men exclusively	30%
Men bullied by men and women	29%	Women bullied by men and women	32%

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Many of these differences may be explained by reference to the characteristics of labour markets where men and women still tend to work predominantly with other individuals of their own gender. As most perpetrators are to be found within managerial ranks and most managers are still male, these differences should not come as a surprise.

How many were bullied – 'singled out' or bullied in group

From previous UK studies of workplace bullying we know that not all those who report themselves as having being bullied have been singled out for mistreatment. Here is what we found:

Table 12: Bullying experience

How many were bullied?	Present study	UNISON (1997)
Only you	31.2%	11.2
You and several other work- colleagues	54.9%	58.8%
Everyone in your work group	14.8%	31.2

These figures suggest that a smaller group than has been previously identified (e.g. UNISON, 1997) report themselves as having been bullied together with their entire workgroup. However, since there a stigma attached to bullying, it is not unlikely that some people may attempt to draw attention away from themselves by reporting that their own experience is shared by others. Still, there is little doubt that in many situations the experience of being bullied is not limited to one or two persons in the workgroup. In such cases, and particularly in cases where everyone seemingly is being exposed to bullying, we may be talking about a repressive work-regime affecting everyone in the group.

The table below shows a considerable variation across sectors.

Table 13: Singled out or bullied in a group – per sector

Area of work	Only you	You plus colleague/s	Everyone in group
NHS Trusts	28.6	55.4	16.0
Post/Telecom.	23.3	67.4	9.3
Civil Service	**28.6**	**50.0**	**21.4**
Higher Education	31.4	60.0	13.6
Teaching	25.8	60.6	13.6
Local Authority	35.0	42.5	22.5
Total Manufact.	22.7	59.1	18.2
Hotel industry	41.7	50.0	8.3
Retailing	50.0	41.7	8.3
Banking	26.7	60.0	13.3
Voluntary Org.	30.8	53.8	15.4
Dance	25.0	50.0	25.0
Police Service	41.4	43.1	15.5
Fire Service	41.3	45.7	13.0
Prison Service	23.0	58.1	18.9

Bullying – a prolonged experience
A defining feature of workplace bullying is the duration of the experience which is s een as playing an essential part in the damage bullying seems to inflict on the target.

Table 14: The duration of the bullying experience (n=549)
(Civil Service in brackets*)*

When did the bullying start?	All bullied	Men	Women
Within the last 6 months	16.8 **(28.6)**	14.4	19.1
Between 6 & 12 months ago	16.4 **(14.3**)	13.7	19.1
Between 1 and 2 years ago	27.5 **(14.3)**	28.9	26.3
More than 2 years ago	39.3 **(42.9)**	43.0	35.6

From the above figures we can conclude that bullying is a drawn-out affair which, for two out of three targets of bullying (66.8%), goes on for more than a year, and for approximately 40% of respondents for more than two years. There was no statistical significance in the experience of men and women with regard to duration. However, a difference emerged for age with the bullying experience lasting longer for older employees, those between 55-70 years of age. By contrast, the youngest respondents reported the shortest duration of bullying.

What do targets do when faced with bullying?
Whilst 34.4% of targets reported that they 'confronted the bully', 12,5% responded that they 'did nothing'. The action most commonly reported by targets of bullying was 'discussing the problem with work colleagues', followed by 'discussing the problem with friends and family'. Some of the results are shown in table 10. From these figures it appears to be obvious that for many individuals neither the personnel office nor the union or staff association seem to be viable options when one is faced with bullying. These low figures may similarly suggest that there may be no policies and formal mechanisms available for targets to make use of in such situations or, if available and acknowledged, may not be trusted as a fair mechanism to deal with such problems. Only 1.8% of these respondents went to occupational health with their problem. Whilst many of the respondents would not have had access to an occupational health service in the first place, the low figure also indicates that many respondents do not have the necessary confidence that the occupational health service may offer assistance in such a situation.

Comparing the responses from all those reporting themselves as having been bullied with those currently bullied (last six months) shows that, in general, the currently bullied group appears to be the more active in seeking support. These findings may suggest that the climate is changing with regard to organisational responsiveness to the problem. However, it is also possible that those bullied at present have a stronger need to portray themselves as pro-active with regard to their own behaviour in order to bolster their self-esteem.

Table 15: Coping strategies
(Civil Service in brackets)

If you have been bullied, what did you do?	All bullied last 5 years	Currently bullied
1. Confronted the bully	34.4 **(19.4)**	40.9 **(14.3)**
2. Went to the union/staff association	16.7 **(8.3)**	24.4 **(21.4)**
3. Went to personnel	11.1 **(16.7)**	12.7 **(14.3)**
4. Discussed it with colleagues	47.3 **(30.6)**	63.3 **(50.0)**
5. Went to occupational health	2.6 **(2.8)**	4.0 **(7.1)**
6. Went to the welfare department	2.9 **(8.3)**	4.2 **(7.1)**
7. Saw my doctor (GP)	10.3 **(5.6)**	15.6 **(0)**
8. Discussed it with friends/family	38.0 **(11.1)**	51.5 **(21.4)**
9. Made use of the organisation's grievance procedure	8.1 **(5.6)**	9.2 **(7.1)**
10. Did nothing	12.5 **(27.8)**	14.6 **(42.9)**

5. RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR

Prior to exploring perceptions of whether respondents had been bullied or not, we presented them with a list of 29 negative behaviours which have frequently been identified with bullying. As was stated earlier this list was based on the Einarsen & Raknes Negative Acts Questionnaire (1996) which we revised by means of a focus group approach. Below you will find the most frequently encountered negative behaviours listed in ranked order. We have also made a distinction between those who experienced the behaviour occasionally and those for whom the experience was a regular occurrence. **Occasional** exposure summarises the two answer-categories 'now & then' and 'monthly, whilst **regular** exposure incorporate the two answer alternatives 'weekly' and 'daily'. An overview of all 29 behaviours and the distribution of answers between the five answer categories, is given in appendix 2.

*Table 16: Top ranked negative behaviours for **Civil Service***
(NB: Total sample in brackets)

Negative Behaviours	Occasional experience	Regular experience
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	**57.9%** (54.0%)	**11.5%** (13.3%)
Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	**51.8%** (42.2%)	**17.0%** (9.7%)
Having your opinions and views ignored	**46.8%** (49.3%)	**7.1%** (7.8%)
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	**42.5%** (39.3%)	**27.0%** (14.6%)
Being ordered to do work below your competence	**30.7%** (35.1%)	**10.7%** (10.7%)
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	**27.0%** (32.0%)	**3.5%** (6.1%)
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	**26.2%** (27.8%)	**2.1%** (3.6%)
Spreading gossip	**25.5%** (29.8%)	**1.4%** (4.1%)

. (The comments below relate to the total sample).

♦ Comparing the internal ranking of individual behaviours with regard to frequency of reported exposure, we found very little difference in the experience for men as opposed to women. However, whilst the relative position of individual acts may be similar, the frequency of exposure was not, with men reporting higher frequencies for most behaviours. For 13 of these behaviours the differences were found to be statistically significant. Only for two of the 29 items making up the Negative Acts Questionnaire did women report a higher frequency of exposure than men at a level which was statistically significant. The two behaviours in question were 'unwanted sexual attention' and 'insulting messages'.

- Respondents of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin reported particularly high frequencies for personally insulting behaviours such as 'insults or offensive remarks made about your person' and 'practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with'. By contrast Chinese respondents reported the fewest negative acts. Nevertheless, in the case of one particular behaviour, 'being ignored, excluded or 'sent to Coventry' the Chinese respondents were found to have the highest prevalence.

- Any attempt to compare experience of bullying for different categories of jobs is fraught with difficulty due to the difficulty of establishing a set of categories which will have the same meaning across sectors. Bearing this in mind, respondents with a manual job reported the highest levels of exposure to negative behaviours. By contrast, the lowest levels of exposure were found among those in clerical or administrative jobs. For the behaviours which refer to work-load, the highest levels of exposure were reported by those in professional or managerial jobs.

- Overall, workers without supervisory responsibility and supervisors (or foremen/women) had experienced more negative behaviours, than respondents in managerial positions.

- Interestingly enough, respondents with tenure of four years or more reported more negative acts than those who had spent less than a year in the job. By contrast, those who had been in their present job for less than a year had experienced fewest negative acts. Only in the case of the item 'unwanted sexual attention' was this general trend broken. Again, the vulnerability of the new or inexperienced person may be a deciding factor in this case.

6. BULLYING AND STYLES OF MANAGEMENT

All respondents were asked to rate their manager or supervisor on a number of characteristics identified with different management styles. These characteristics were typical examples of behaviours identified with the following styles of management or styles of leadership: autocratic, divisive, *laissez-faire* and non-contingent punishment (all negative styles). Non-contingent punishment refers to a punitive management style where the punishment seems to be unrelated or not contingent upon the behaviour of the subordinate. The positive styles measured were participative leadership, integrity of manager and individualised consideration. The last of these refers to the extent the manager looks after the needs of the individual.

We divided the sample into four groups: 'currently bullied', 'previously bullied', 'witnessed bullying only' and 'neither bullied nor witnessed bullying'. Overall we found that the experience of bullying was associated with higher scores on the items linked with 'negative' management styles, and lower scores on the 'positive management styles'. For the 'neither bullied nor witnessed bullying' group the result was exactly the opposite, with relatively high scores on the behaviour identified with positive management styles and low scores on the styles considered to be negative. The two groups 'previously bullied' and

'witnessed bullying' reported a very similar experience, with all scores at a level between the two other groups, though more similar to the non-bullied than the 'currently bullied' group. (A graphic illustration of this relationship is given in appendix 2). The near identical graphs of the two middle groups is caused by the fact that only three lines or graphs are clearly visible, with the two middle lines largely overlapping.

7. BULLYING IS ASSOCIATED WITH A NEGATIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Independently of posing questions about the experience of bullying, we asked respondents a number of questions with regard to their work-environment, using questions from a standardised stress-questionnaire, the Pressure Management Indicator (PMI). Bullying was found to be associated with a negative work-climate, high workload and unsatisfactory relationships at work. When the sample was divided into four groups following the same procedure as for management styles, it was found that those who were 'currently bullied' reported the least satisfactory work-environment, followed by 'previously bullied', 'witnessed' and 'neither witnessed nor bullied'. In the tables below we compare these scores with normative scores for the general population as generated from previous studies using the same instrument. All scores refer to mean values.

Table 17: Sources of pressures in your job (mean scores)

Item	Currently bullied	Previously Bullied	Witnessed Bullying	Neither W nor B	Norm	P
Workload	23.17	21.36	19.94	17.95	17.54	<0.001
Organisational climate	17.95	15.93	15.27	13.64	13.24	<0.001
Relationship	35.47	29.15	27.36	24.70	25.78	<0.001

In the next table we have repeated this analysis but this time we have divided the sample into three groups: not bullied, occasionally bullied and regularly bullied.

Table 18: Sources of pressures in your job (mean scores)

Item	Occasionally bullied	Regularly bullied	Not currently bullied	Norm	P
Workload	23.14	23.42	19.06	17.54	<0.001
Organisational climate	17.83	18.80	14.45	13.24	<0.001
Relationship	35.21	37.16	26.17	25.78	<0.001

Comparing the two groups of currently bullied individuals, we found that in all cases those regularly bullied were identified with higher scores or more negative outcomes than those bullied occasionally. However, only in the case of 'relationship' at work was the difference between the scores of the two groups statistically significantly different. Nevertheless, for both bullied groups the scores were well above the norms for the general population.

Bullying and change

Based on the assumption that situational factors may contribute to bullying, we asked people whether any of the following events had taken place in their organisation within the last 6 months and had this response:

Table 19: Bullying and organisational events (mean scores)

Item	Currently bullied	Previously Bullied	Witness bullying	Neither W nor B	P
Major organisational change	0.51	0.48	0.48	0.40	<0.001
Redundancies	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.16	NS
Budget cuts	0.54	0.47	0.49	0.40	<0.001
Major technological change	0.26	0.22	0.22	0.20	<0.001
Major internal restructuring	0.50	0.47	0.45	0.38	<0.001
Change of management	0.53	0.47	0.45	0.38	<0.001

With the exception of 'redundancies', we found a statistically significant relationship between exposure to bullying and various events frequently linked with organisational change. The association between bullying and organisational events appears to be strongest for 'change of management'. This confirms previous findings (e.g. UNISON, 1997) which suggest that bullying often coincides with change of management. In the case of 'major organisational change', 'budget cuts' and 'major internal restructuring' the scores for the 'witness' group also happen to be statistically significantly different from those who have neither witnessed nor experienced bullying. This should suggest that the association between bullying and organisational change cannot simply be explained with reference to dissatisfaction and the present state of mind of those currently bullied.

8. OUTCOMES OF BULLYING

When we discuss potential outcomes of bullying, it is necessary to be aware of the difficulty in establishing the true relationship between cause and effect in cross-sectional studies of the kind used in the present study. Whilst there are strong indications that exposure to negative behaviours and bullying do

have negative implications, there are other ways of interpreting such findings. It is for example possible that people with health problems prior to any experience of bullying may be more likely to report themselves as targets of bullying. Alternatively, people with health problems may be less able to cope with a bullying situation, where personal inner resources may be a deciding factor in the outcome of the process.

Most previous studies of workplace bullying, which have considered possible outcomes of the process, have focussed on the effect of bullying on the individual's health and wellbeing. Whilst the exploration of such effects was central to the present study, we wanted to incorporate an investigation of possible organisational outcomes of bullying and negative behaviours at work. As a result we decided to include measures of sickness-absenteeism, intention to leave and self-rated productivity. Productivity was measured by asking people to rate their own current performance out of 100% (normal capacity) given different options expressed in percentages. In addition we wanted to know how commitment to and satisfaction with the organisation might be affected by people's experience of bullying.

We decided to measure outcomes of bullying in two different ways. In the first instance we asked respondents to consider a number of statements regarding possible outcomes of bullying. These statements were all taken from a Norwegian scale called the Bergen Bullying Index. In addition we measured possible outcomes independently of any experience of bullying in order to avoid any interference or cues from the questions directly related to bullying.

The Bergen Bullying Index (BBI)

The BBI is made up of 10 statements concerned with possible outcomes of bullying. All respondents were asked to answer the questions independently of whether they had been bullied or not.

An overview of the distribution of responses to the first five statements which are considered the core elements of the index , is given in table 23.

Table 20: Perceived outcomes of bullying (Bergen Bullying Index)

Statement	totally agree	partially agree	partially disagree	totally disagree
1)Bullying represents a serious pressure in my daily work	7.8%	9.0%	7.1%	76.1%
2) Bullying is a serious problem at my workplace	6.3%	12.3%	12.9%	68.5%
3) Bullying at my workplace reduces my/our motivation	15.1%	13.5%	6.8%	64.6%
4) Bullying at work affects my satisfaction	15.6%	11.0%	6.1%	67.2%
5) Bullying at my workplace reduces our efficiency	18.7%	13.8%	7.4%	60.0%

If we concentrate on those who agree with the statements, totally or partially, we can conclude that 16.8% of respondents consider bullying to represent a serious pressure in their daily work. (The figures refer to the sum of the two columns). This is well above the 10.6% who reported being bullied, suggesting that bullying has negative implications beyond those who are directly targeted. Similarly, the fact that 18.6% considered bullying to be a serious problem in their workplace also indicates that the problem is real and observed by people who are themselves not necessarily involved. It is also noteworthy that between 26.6% (satisfaction) and 32.5% (efficiency) of respondents agreed with statements which suggest that bullying has negative implications for individuals which are likely to manifest themselves in reduced performance at work.

Looking at the response to these questions across different sectors, large discrepancies emerged. Overall the responses appear to correspond to the level of self-reported bullying in individual sectors with post/telecommunications, the prison service and teaching being most affected. For example, a total of 34% of respondents from the prison service, followed by 27.3% and 25% for post/telecommunications and teaching respectively, reported that bullying represented a serious pressure in their work. In response to the statement 'bullying at my workplace reduces our efficiency', more than half the prison service respondents (54.2%) and 44.7% of respondents within the post/telecommunications sector agreed with the statement. The scale of these responses suggests the existence of serious problems, acknowledged by a very large part of the workforce within these sectors. In table 24 the responses to this question are given for each individual sector.

Table 21: Perceived outcomes of bullying – sector by sector

Area of work	Stmnt 1 Pressure	Stmnt 2 Serious problem	Stmnt 3 Affects motivation	Stmnt 4 Affects satisfaction	Stmnt 5 Affects efficiency
NHS Trusts	14.5	18.7	26.3	25.3	30.9
Post/Telecom.	27.3	27.1	39.0	35.4	44.7
Civil Service	**10.7**	**18.5**	**27.6**	**23.3**	**29.8**
Higher Educ.	11.6	12.5	24.0	20.4	26.0
Teaching	25.0	29.6	34.7	33.5	38.8
Local Authority	14.9	14.9	23.7	24.3	26.3
Total Manufact.	8.7	9.3	21.3	18.2	22.3
Hotel industry	11.5	15.3	23.3	21.4	25.8
Retailing	12.7	9.1	21.0	23.0	25.1
Banking	13.5	9.0	22.3	24.5	24.2
Voluntary Org.	12.7	22.9	28.2	25.6	32.7
Dance	11.1	11.1	26.3	27.8	27.5
Police Service	16.3	17.4	29.9	27.7	35.1
Fire Service	16.3	15.6	30.4	27.7	35.8
Prison Service	34.0	42.3	45.1	40.1	54.2

Direct and indirect effects of self-labelling bullying

In order to illustrate possible impacts of different experience with workplace bullying, we repeated the procedure used for analysing the relationship between bullying and management style reported above. Again we divided the total sample into the four groups: 'currently bullied', 'previously bullied', 'witnessed bullying' and 'neither bullied not witnessed bullying'.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then carried out. In line with the results reported above for management style, it appears that bullying may have a significant effect on both mental and physical health. Compared with the norms for the general population we find very much higher levels of mental and physical ill health for the currently bullied group than for any other groups. As far as mental health is concerned the average value is well above the threshold level, at which an individual may be in need of screening for potential psychiatric consultation, referred to above as mental health caseness. We would like to stress that what when we use the term mental ill health, we refer to what is considered to be ill health among the normal population at large and not what may be referred to as pathological mental disturbance.
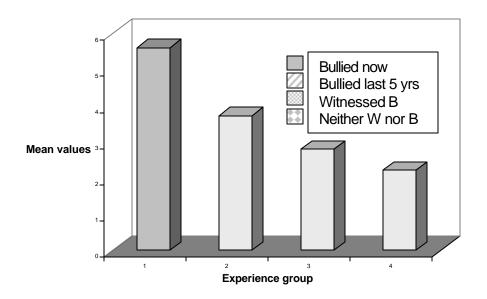

Figure 1: Experience of bullying and mental health (GHQ-mean score)

Table 22: Bullying experience and health outcomes (mean scores)

Scale	Currently bullied	Previously Bullied	Witness Bullying	Neither W nor B	Norm	P
Mental health – GHQ score	5.61	3.73	2.80	2.23	*	<0.001
Physical health – OSI score	41.70	35.99	32.72	30.23	30.64	<0.001

* For the GHQ a score of 4 or above is considered to be threshold which may imply a need for screening for psychiatric treatment. The figures above suggest that this may be the case for a very high percentage of those who are currently bullied. However, it is not only the 'currently bullied' group which appear to be affected. The 'previously bullied' group also report high levels of physical as well mental ill health. This suggests that the effects of bullying may continue beyond the time of the bullying incident when persistent exposure to negative behaviours may have ceased. In many respects this makes the problem of bullying even more serious both from an individual and organisational point of view and should certainly provide the necessary impetus for organisations to start taking the issue seriously.

However, equally worrying is the fact that the effects seem, to some extent, to extend beyond those directly targeted to include also observers or bystanders. Again it is difficult to be too sure about the direction of cause and effect. One possibility is that bullying has a direct influence or effect on bystanders, for example by spreading fear or worry about who is likely to be the next in line to be bullied. An alternative explanation is that bullying may be more likely to take place in an unhealthy work-environment, where everyone's health may be affected to a certain extent.

Dividing the currently bullied group (n=553) into two groups: occasionally bullied ('rarely', 'now and then' and 'monthly') and regularly bullied ('weekly' or 'daily') produced the following results:

Table 23: Bullying and health outcomes (bullied group)

Item	Not currently bullied	Occasionally bullied	Regularly bullied	Norm	P
Mental health – GHQ score	2.62	5.45	6.68	*	<0.001
Physical health – OSI score	31.81	41.22	44.86	30.64	<0.001

When the same procedure was repeated for the following variables: intention to leave, sickness absenteeism, self-rated performance, organisational commitment and organisational satisfaction, the same result emerged for each and every one of the analyses. In all cases the currently bullied group was worst affected, followed by previously bullied, witnesses and lastly those who were neither bullied nor witnessed bullying taking place. In most cases the results showed that the mean values for the four groups were statistically different from all the other groups.

Table 24: Bullying experience and outcomes

Scale	Currently bullied	Previously Bullied	Witness Bullying	Neither W nor B	P
Sickness absenteeism	2.18	2.03	1.85	1.78	<0.001
Intention to leave	3.23	2.59	2.39	2.21	<0.001
Work performance	2.61	2.87	3.01	3.19	<0.001
Organisational satisfaction	14.40	18.13	18.20	20.15	<.001
Organisational commitment	16.62	18.76	19.12	19.63	<0.001

Not surprisingly, from these figures we may conclude that being regularly exposed to bullying appears to have more health implications than occasional exposure.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The present study has confirmed that bullying represents an occupational hazard of considerable magnitude. With one in ten people reporting having been bullied within the last six months, a figure which rises to one in four when the period is extended to the last five years, workplace bullying cannot any longer be relegated to the fringes of occupational life. Whilst certain sectors appear to be more vulnerable to bullying, no sector escapes the problem entirely. Similarly, whilst some demographic groups may be more vulnerable than others, bullying is present at some level across all groups.

By way of contrast, people in position of authority are more likely to be identified as perpetrators, with a manager or supervisor identified as perpetrator in three out of four cases. Still, in more than a third of incidents, a colleague was identified as perpetrator. Taken together with the fact that certain styles of management were identified as particularly conducive to bullying, this suggests that the primary onus for change should be on management. The fact that managers at all levels reported experience of bullying at the same level as those with no managerial position puts further pressure for management intervention on this issue.

Focussing on exposure to negative behaviours associated with bullying, it was found that a very large proportion of the workforce had experienced such behaviours, a considerable number on a regular basis.

When possible effects of bullying were considered, it was found that not only was bullying associated with poor mental health, in addition to negative outcomes for the individual bullying also appeared to have organisational effects, not least with respect to an increased propensity to leave the organisation. Moreover, exposure to negative behaviours alone,

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independently of whether one had labelled one's experience of negative behaviour as bullying or not, was also found to be associated with negative individual as well as organisational outcomes. This suggests that destructive and bullying behaviour at work may be an even greater problem than is expressed in the number of people who decide to label their experience as bullying. The fact that that the effect of bullying appears to extend beyond those who are currently bullied to affect also those who were bullied in the past, as well as those who had witnessed bullying taking place, is an even greater reason for concern.

Finally, the report should provide sufficient evidence to put the issue of bullying on any organisation's agenda. Moreover, the results suggest that the problem of a widespread use of negative and destructive behaviours at work in general, and bullying in particular, needs to be understood and acted upon in the local context within which it occurs.

10. Recommendations

❑ **Establish a culture free of bullying**

Bullying can only thrive when it is condoned, directly or indirectly by management. The fact that most bullies are found within managerial ranks further suggests that in order to develop a work-environment free of bullying, management must critically examine their own practices which may contribute directly and indirectly to bullying. To support a culture shift, it may be necessary to undertake training in general managerial skills, stress management and emotional control and awareness.

❑ **Introduce effective, safe and fair policies on bullying**.

No organisation is immune from bullying though the scale and intensity of the problem vary greatly between organisations. This suggests that all organisations should have in place policies and procedures which can deal with problems when they occur, and which may act as a deterrent to bullying in the first place. Any anti-bullying policy should provide targets of bullying with a 'safe' reporting procedure, protecting them from possible retribution, whilst at the same time ensuring a fair hearing of the case. Severe or repeated breach of policy should be met with sanctions. However**,** in order to ensure their effectiveness, a monitoring system needs to be put in place.

❑ **Confront and challenge abusive and bullying management styles**.

Bullying is often associated with an autocratic, insensitive and even abusive management style. The time has come to challenge seriously 'confrontational' or 'macho' management styles, so often preached by management and business schools embracing an aggressive US style of management. Not only are such styles morally reprehensible, according to the findings of the present study they are also linked to negative organisational outcomes. Instead organisations should embrace co-

operative styles of management based on personal and professional qualities such as integrity and consideration for the needs of the individual and the group.

❑ **Reduce bullying by reducing stress-levels**

Bullying is associated with a negative work-climate, high workload and unsatisfactory relationships. This suggest that organisations may be able to go some way towards resolving or at least minimising the problem of bullying by reducing and controlling stress at work. (It follows that any risk-assessment strategy focusing on psychosocial work-hazards should include bullying and victimisation).

❑ **Situation – not person: Controlling the controllable**

Bullying is a complex issue which needs to be treated with care. Whilst the personalities of offender and target often play a role in cases of bullying, we consider approaches which focus on the pathology of offender (or target), eg by means of screening, to be at best unhelpful. Instead, organisations should focus on those issues or antecedents of bullying which are under their own control and where intervention can be achieved.

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12. APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

ADVISORY BOARD - MEMBERSHIP

Lord Monkswell	Chair of Committee. Member of the House of Lords, Sponsor of the Dignity at Work Act.
Dr Rob Allen	Dr Rob Allen, Director Human Resources, East Suffolk Local Health Services Trust, Member of NHS Executive
Chris Ball	MSF, Voluntary Sector Secretary
Jan Berry	Secretary Inspectors Committee, Police Federation
David Boardman	HRD & Empl. Communication Manager, Co-op
Dr David Murray Bruce	Group Chief Medical Consultant, Nat West
Karen Charlesworth	Institute of Management
Elisabeth Gyngell	Head of Division A, Health and Safety Executive (Policy on health strategy management & research)
Jacqueline Jeynes	Federation of Small Business
Dr Mary Kinoulty	Head of Occupational Health, Longbridge, Rover Group
Michael Ladenburg	Director General, British Occupational Health Research Foundation
Dr Ian Lambert	Senior Medical Officer, Shell UK Ltd.
Diana Lamplugh	The Suzy Lamplugh Trust
Tom Mellish	Trades Union Congress
Graeme Pykett	Senior Policy Adviser, Health & Safety, Confederation of British Industry.
Surinder Sharma	Corporate Equal Opportunities Manager, The Littlewoods Organisation.
Lyn Witheridge	Chief Executive, The Andrea Adams Trust
Dianah Worman	Institute of Personnel Development
Ms Mandy Wright	Head of Employee Affairs & Equalities Unit, Local Government Management Board
Cary Cooper & Helge Hoel	Manchester School of Management, UMIST