

SURREY CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX

Workplace Discrimination Survey



Background

On 31st March 2008 Surrey Citizens Advice Bureaux held a multi agency conference 'Tackling the Cost of Inequality'. The purpose of the conference was to identify how Surrey CABx and their partners can work together to combat alienation, economic inequality and prejudice which leads to communities living parallel lives, where the lack of a shared sense of belonging creates the conditions for fear, hate and extremism on all sides.

The CAB service regularly receives enquiries from clients who have directly or indirectly been the victims of harassment/bullying at work. We recognise harassment/bullying as the misuse/abuse of power or position to include: unjustified persistent criticism; verbally aggressive behaviour; isolating and being unnecessarily uncooperative towards individuals; social exclusion in the workplace or at organised social events; unjustified removal of responsibility; allocation to lesser tasks; withholding information and persistently and unjustifiably ignoring views and suggestions.

Delegates at the conference were asked to complete a short questionnaire about their experiences of harassment/bullying in the workplace.

124 people attended the conference from a wide range of both statutory and voluntary agencies. 82 people completed the questionnaire and 87 people completed the Ethnic & Diversity monitoring form. Of those completing the Ethnic & Diversity monitoring form, 74 were women and 10% were from ethnic minorities. 13% declared as being disabled.

The Results

Have you ever been subjected to bullying/discrimination in the workplace?

Yes: 46
No: 36

If yes, was it reported by you or others?

Not at all: 16
By me: 29
Others: 1

Have you ever witnessed work colleagues being bullied/discriminated against?

Yes: 53
No: 28
N/a: 1

If yes, was it reported by you or others?

Not at all: 13
By Me: 29
Others: 11

Does your workplace have an anti-harassment/dignity at work policy?

Yes: 68
No: 5
Don't know: 7
N/a: 2

If yes, has this policy ever been enforced?

Yes: 25
No: 13
Not Sure: 29
N/a: 1

Conclusion:

There would appear to be a high incidence of bullying in the workplace across the statutory and voluntary sectors in Surrey. This must have a serious impact on the wellbeing of members of staff and their ability to deliver a good level of service, as well as staff turnover.

Reporting levels were reasonably high. The questionnaire did not cover whether direct action was taken as a result of reporting but a relatively high number of organisations have policies in force which have been used to tackle the problem.

Action:

- **All organisations should ensure they have an Anti harassment/Dignity at work policy.**
- **All staff should be made aware of this policy as part of their induction.**
- **Whilst the number of organisations having policies was high, these policies seem to have had little effect on preventing the**

numbers of cases of bullying in the workplace. Policies must ensure confidential reporting systems are in place.

- **All staff should be trained to identify what bullying is.**
- **All delegates should copy this report to senior management within their organisations.**
- **The majority of people answering the questionnaire were women. No assumption should be made that the incidents of bullying were gender based but organisations may wish to consider whether this is relevant to them.**
- **Organisations should conduct their own internal survey.**

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