Preventing violence and harassment at work

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Trends in current thinking (Di Martino et al., 2003)

• A shift in focus from physical to psychological violence

• Focus on repeated behaviour – on a sequence of relatively minor acts

• Focus on dignity: widening the scope of health, safety and wellbeing at work
  – Dignity, human rights and combating discrimination

  – Amsterdam Treaty: Combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation (new article 13 of EC Treaty)
Client/customer violence: some obstacles for successful intervention

- Sensitive issue for organisations and individuals involved
  - Potential implications for business and recruitment

- “The customer is king”: Focus on customer sovereignty
  - Implications for power-balance between employee and customer

- Stigmatisation of targets: personal and professional shortcomings (responsible for managing relationships)

- “Part of the job”: normalisation of violence
Harassment and bullying: some obstacles for successful intervention

• Sensitive issue for organisations and individuals involved: intervention may indicate a problem

• Dynamics and process development essential for understanding and success of intervention

• Issues around power and control often at the centre:
  – Those for main responsibility for its prevention could be the source of the problem

• Subjective and intangible nature of phenomena making it difficult to acknowledge and rectify
## Interventions: third party violence

(Taxonomy adopted from Murphy & Sauter, 2003/EASHW 2009)

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<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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<td><strong>Society</strong></td>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>Accident investigation</td>
<td>Rehabilitation/compensation</td>
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<td>Corporate agreements</td>
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<td><strong>Employer</strong></td>
<td>Logging incidents</td>
<td>Accident investigation</td>
<td>Organisational recovery</td>
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<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Conflict management</td>
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<td>Agreement/policy</td>
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<td>Action plans</td>
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<td><strong>Job/task</strong></td>
<td>Risk assessment</td>
<td>Intervening in situations</td>
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<td>Reduction and control of risk</td>
<td>Limitation and management</td>
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<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Applying protection/de-escalation</td>
<td>Individual recovery</td>
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<td>(pre-employment testing?)</td>
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## Interventions: bullying & harassment

*Taxonomy adopted from Murphy & Sauter, 2003*

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<tr>
<td><strong>Society</strong></td>
<td>Law/regulation</td>
<td>Court case</td>
<td>Provision of rehabilitation opportunities</td>
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<td>Policy/code of conduct (sanctions)</td>
<td>Ind. tribunal</td>
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<td>Collect.agreements</td>
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<td><strong>Employer</strong></td>
<td>Policy/procedure</td>
<td>Handl. procedure</td>
<td>Organisational recovery</td>
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<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td>Training/awareness</td>
<td>Mediation</td>
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<td>Org. survey</td>
<td>Investigation</td>
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<td><strong>Job/task</strong></td>
<td>Risk assessment</td>
<td>Monitoring/case analysis</td>
<td>Group recovery</td>
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<td>Job-redesign</td>
<td>Staff survey</td>
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<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Social support/Counselling</td>
<td>Pers. &amp; prof. rehabilitation Redress</td>
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Challenges ahead: getting it right
Level of society: key challenges

• Anti-bullying legislation/regulation
  – Considering need for EU-wide regulation
  – Evaluation of effectiveness of regulation (e.g. Hoel & Einarsen, 2009), e.g. role of employers, labour inspectorate etc.
  – Communication of lessons learnt
  – Clarify role of employer and enforcement authorities

• Policies/codes of conduct (e.g. framework agreement)
  – Communication of their existence and content (e.g. Vartia et al, 2009): role of social partners
  – Ensuring wide implementation

• Rehabilitation
  – Provision of tailor-made services for victims
  – Evaluation of the effectiveness of services
  – Ensuring justice and redress for victims
Organisational level: key challenges

• Develop and implement local policy
  – Employee/trade union engagement
  – Management awareness and responsibility
  – Ensure integration with other organisational processes and functional requirements

• Management training
  – conflict management

• Identification of risk-groups: understanding of differences and overlaps between harassment / bullying and discrimination

• Local investigation of complaints
Organisational level: applying the ‘traffic light model’ (JUM, 2007)
Harassment/bullying: factors undermining opportunity for a fair ‘hearing’ – 1/2

(Hoel, 2009)

- Encounters in private spaces
- Patterned acts explained as isolated events
- Events cannot be understood in isolation
- Perpetrators acting differently to others
Harassment/bullying: factors undermining opportunity for a fair ‘hearing’ – 2/2

- The powerful/irreplaceable likely to be believed
- Hurt and unstable victims receiving little sympathy
- When bullying is rational to achieve managerial objectives/control – managerial loyalties could/will impact on outcomes
Investigation of complaints: What?

- A formal response to a complaint of bullying/harassment
- To establish the facts and come to a decision about whether a complaint is upheld or not
- Builds on and must adhere to the organisation’s bullying policy and principles for natural justice
- Carried out by trained investigators
Level of job/task: key challenges

- Risk analysis and assessment
  - Development and validation of generic risk-assessment tools (e.g. BRAT, Hoel & Giga, 2005)

- Integrate risk-analysis of violence, bullying and harassment within main stream risk assessment approaches
Level of the individual: key challenges

- Acknowledging the need for behavioural standards and rules in an increasingly diverse workplace
- Greater focus on the role and responsibility of observers
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of support and rehabilitation efforts
- Establishing fairness and justice: understanding and ensuring victim redress
Thanks for listening!

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