***Towards a Healthier Workforce….***

**What do we mean by harassment and bullying?**

In the Equality Act 2010 harassment is defined as ‘unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating and intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.’   
  
Bullying is not specifically defined in law, but in their advice leaflet for employees1, Acas give the following definition: ’Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient'.

**What do harassment and bullying look like?**

Again, quoting from ACAS: ’Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious’1.   
  
Harassment and bullying can range from extremes such as physical violence to less obvious forms like ignoring someone. They can be delivered in a variety of ways - with or without witnesses - and be persistent behaviour over a period of time, or a one-off act and can include:

* physical contact which is unwanted
* unwelcome remarks about a person’s age, dress, appearance, race or marital status
* jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, sectarian songs and letters
* posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, bunting and emblems
* isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion from social activities
* coercion for sexual favours
* pressure to participate in political/religious groups
* intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking
* failure to safeguard confidential information
* shouting at staff
* setting impossible deadlines
* persistent criticism
* personal insults.

**Responsibilities of employers and employees**

An employer’s first responsibility is to put in place a robust and well communicated policy that clearly articulates the organisation’s commitment to promoting dignity and respect at work.   
  
Individuals also have a responsibility to behave in ways which support a non hostile working environment for themselves and their colleagues. They should play their part in making the organisation’s policy a reality and be prepared to challenge inappropriate behaviour and take action if they observe or have evidence that someone is being harassed.