

Centre for
Mental Health



Reforming Whole-Organisation Strategies to Reflect Mental Wellbeing Needs of the Workforce

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What is a safe culture?

- Examining the attitudes we allow in our organisation.
- Actually we all know what safe and unsafe cultures feel like
 - What is the risk of speaking up?
- Safety – like good financial health, staff morale, governance, effective leadership – must be a continual state, not a snapshot.

Channels for speaking up –
wellbeing leads

Lines of communication to and
from the Board

Policies and procedures that
everyone knows and practices

Senior level action

**Building
blocks of
a safe
culture**



When do people feel unsafe?

- Discussing racism
- Needing to talk about their health
 - Particularly mental health
- When fearing or experiencing personal attack for their views or actions
- Fearing consequences or retribution
- In a culture which permits people to be emotionally abused.

'In plain sight'



Verbal bullying (harsh treatment, threat, intimidation, racism, homophobic remarks)

Physical bullying (intimidating physical presence; inappropriate touch; physical assault; intentional damage of property or work)

Social bullying (belittling in front of colleagues; lying; excluding from activities/opportunities, or encouraging others to exclude)

Cyber/remote bullying (using email or social media to deliver abusive, undermining or hurtful messages; public sharing of private information without consent)

Types of bullying or emotional abuse



Our survey of 574 responses

- 87% cite social bullying
- 78% cite verbal bullying
- 25% cite cyber bullying
- 7% cite physical bullying
 - There is a significant overlap between social and verbal bullying



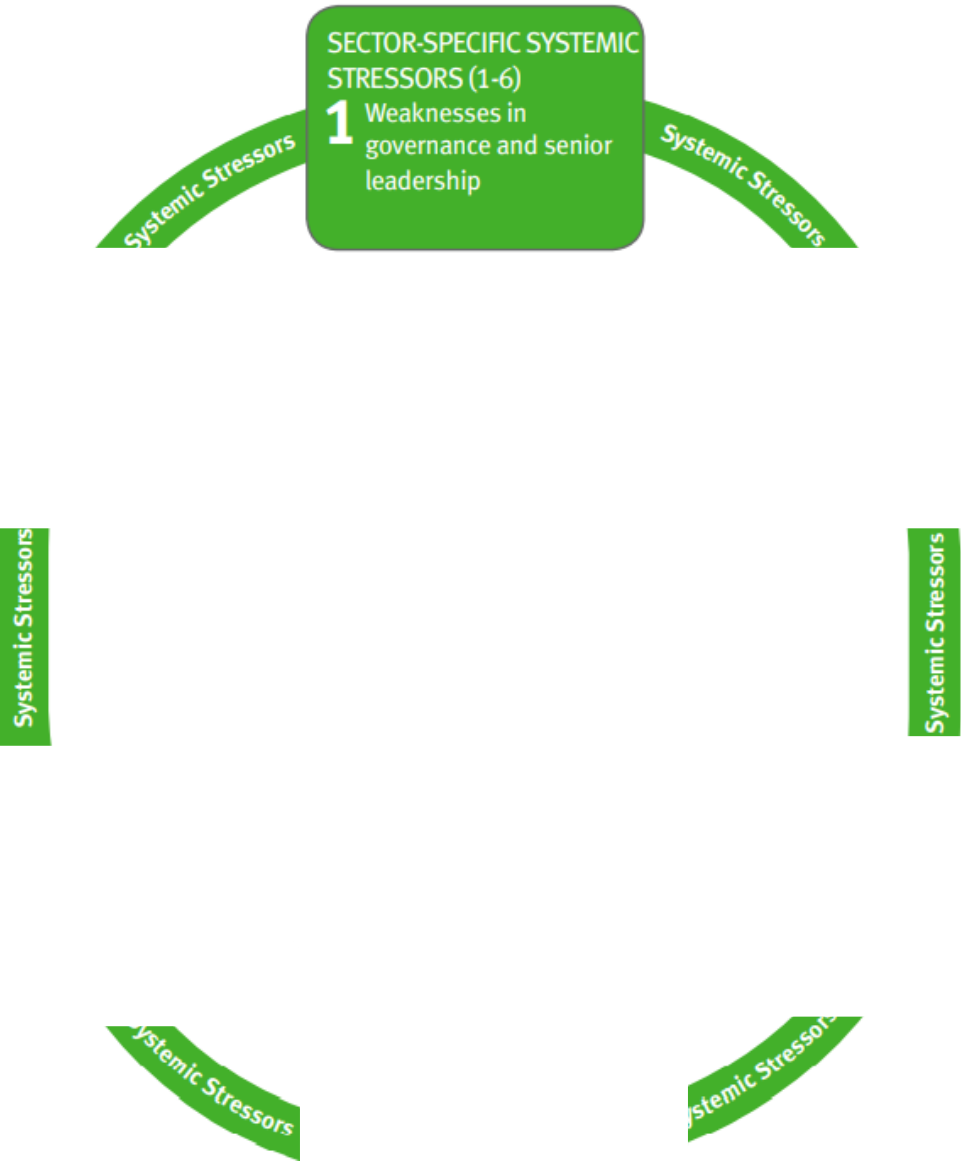
Additional findings

- ❑ Chief executives and senior managers were often the perpetrators or involved in the bullying (45% and 57% respectively)
- ❑ co-workers were reported in 27% of cases
- ❑ bullying was reported formally in 58% of cases
 - these complaints were considered to have been satisfactorily addressed in 3% of cases, and not resolved or resolved unsatisfactorily in 68% and 29% of cases respectively
- ❑ Following the bullying, 67% of those affected left their organisation



In their words

- ❑ “I told my line manager, HR and the CEO (I escalated it myself as the responses I got were so poor) and they all recommended speaking to the bully myself and trying to fix it.”
- ❑ “Everyone witnessed it but nobody would speak to her about her behaviour. It was eventually problematised as my failure to upward manage my bully.”
- ❑ “I left my job because of the impact on my mental health. I had to leave to recover but it has sparked a period of extreme financial difficulty.”
- ❑ “I have been here for 7 years and desperately want to leave but I don't feel able to do any other job now due to the confidence I have lost. I feel sick on Sunday nights at the thought of coming to work”.



SYSTEMIC STRESSORS

Evaluate our workplace culture – get an external view of its strengths and weaknesses.

Promote workplace health and safety – measure stress at work, organise social events, provide the right equipment needed for the job.

Promote mental health and wellbeing – implement proactive wellbeing measures, 1-1 meetings, workload measurement, time off for wellbeing activities, advice & counselling (EAP).

Work better with conflict – senior staff having a compassionate leadership style and zero tolerance of oppressive behaviour and discriminatory attitudes.

Next steps

Charities collaborate to improve workplace cultures, e.g. by sharing expertise around governance and operational processes; identifying better practice and 'benchmarking' of performance.

Infrastructure support for smaller charities to share HR management functions with other like-sized or larger charities.

Learning from the experience of organisations which have been forced to examine their workplace culture following the exposure of bullying, and consider the implications for governance, systems, processes and workforce development.

Targeted training for trustees and CEOs in relation to their roles and responsibilities for addressing bullying behaviour and promoting healthier workplace cultures.

How charities can work together

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Thank you

For more information:



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