

The harassment of disabled people:



**An easy read toolkit for
DPOs and organisations
that support disabled
people**





Harassment of disabled people is when someone hurts or does bad things to a person because they are disabled. This means things like saying something nasty or hitting a disabled person.



Some people call harassment **bullying** or **hate crime**.



A report called **Hidden in Plain Sight** was written in 2011. It looked into the harassment of disabled people.



Hidden in Plain Sight found out that nearly 2 million disabled people in the UK were victims of a crime in 2009/2010.



They also found out that disabled people are more likely to be the victim of a crime than non-disabled people.

What is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for organisations that represent and support disabled people. It will help your organisation to:

- support disabled people tell somebody if they are harassed
- make sure councils and the police take reports of harassment seriously
- stop people thinking they can get away with the harassment of disabled people



What is the harassment of disabled people?

The harassment of disabled people can happen in lots of different ways. Harassment is things like:



- calling you names



- touching you when you do not want them to



- using things like Facebook to send you nasty messages



- hitting you

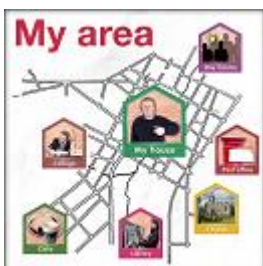


- stealing your money



- damaging your home or your things

Where are disabled people harassed?



The harassment of disabled people can happen in lots of different places.



Harassment can happen when a person is out and about. This means places like a local park or on public transport



Harassment can happen when a person is close to home. This means places like the local shop.



Harassment can happen at home, school or work.

What are the effects of harassment?



Some people told us that because they had been harassed they did not want to go out.



'I would rather stay at home where I am safe'



Some people told us that they just put up with harassment.



'I rise above it, I try to ignore it'



Some people told us they felt scared and threatened.



'I have been travelling on the bus and I feel threatened'

How to report disability related harassment



It is hard to do anything about harassment unless it is reported. This is when you tell someone you trust what is happening.



It is important to say if you think that being disabled is the reason for the harassment.

Sometimes disabled people do not report harassment because:



- they are frightened of what will happen
- they are worried no one will believe them
- they do not know who to tell



How do you tell the police?



If somebody is in danger call **999**.



Contact your local police station if it is not an emergency.

Where else can I report harassment?



Disabled people can report harassment to **Third Party Reporting Centres**.



Third Party Reporting Centres have been set up because some people do not feel confident telling the police about harassment.



Third Party Reporting Centres give information and support to people who have been harassed. They can also support you to tell the police if you want them to.

You can find a list of Third Party Reporting Centres on the Police Scotland website at

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/205073/hate-crime-3rd-party-reporting-centres>



If the harassment happened at school or was carried out by pupils you can tell the school.



If the harassment happened on public transport you can tell the transport company.



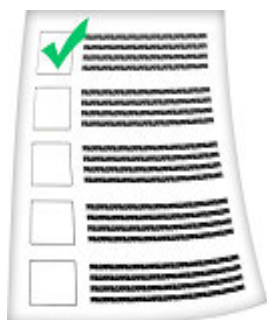
You can tell your doctor about harassment. They can also help with any physical or mental health effects of the harassment.



If you are a young person being harassed you can call Childline on **0800 1111**.

Checklist for telling somebody about harassment

When you tell someone about harassment it helps if you can give clear information. These are the things you should think about:



- what happened
- when it happened
- where it happened
- who was harassing you
- if you were hurt
- if anything you own was damaged
- if it has happened before



Sometimes people think that telling somebody about harassment might make things worse. If you are worried about this tell the person you report the harassment to.

What support do people who have been harassed need?

They need support to report the harassment. This might mean:



- support to access **advocacy** services. Advocacy is about having the support to help you speak up.



- support to access health services. This is because harassment can have an effect on the body and the mind.

How can we let people know about disability related harassment in our local area?



Disabled people who have been harassed are the experts.



They can take part in activities to let other people know about disability related harassment. The types of activity people can support are:

- training
- involvement in hate crime groups
- telling their stories at events

- supporting other people who have been harassed

What does the law say about harassment?



There are lots of laws to stop the harassment of disabled people. These laws can help organisations that support disabled people to do something about harassment.



The Public Sector Equality Duty is a law for public authorities like councils and hospitals. It says they must think about how they can make things better for people from different groups. This includes disabled people.



The **Offences (Aggravated by Prejudice) (Scotland) Act** is a piece of law. It says that if a person is found guilty of harassing someone because they are disabled this must be thought about when punishing them.



The **Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act** is a piece of law to try and stop people from being harmed. It talks about all the things that can be done to keep adults who might be at risk safe.

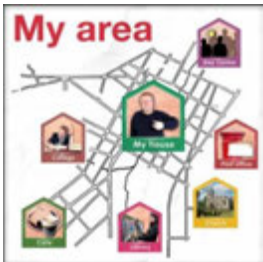


The Human Rights Act looks after our human rights. These are the rights and freedoms that everyone should have. This means things like the right to life and the right to feel safe.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People sets out how disabled people have the same rights as everyone else.

Letting people know about harassment of disabled people in local areas



Organisations that support disabled people have worked hard to let people know about the harassment of disabled people. They have done this locally and nationally.



Lots of organisations have a duty to stop the harassment of disabled people.



Some of these organisations are:



- the Scottish Government
- schools and colleges
- local councils
- health services
- social care services
- transport services



There is still a lot to be done to make sure everybody who has a duty to stop harassment takes action against it.



Organisations that support disabled people need to know about how harassment is dealt with in their local area. This will help them to work with local organisations.

There is a very important message that public bodies need to look at when dealing with the harassment of disabled people. The message is that they must:



- understand what the harassment of disabled people looks like and how it affects people.
- take action to stop the harassment of disabled people. This means working with disabled people and the organisations that support them

- take action to deal with the people who are harassing disabled people

Tips to communicate well with public bodies



Public bodies are organisations like governments, councils and health boards.

To communicate well with public bodies you can:



- use things like the Human Rights Act.
- make sure that you have clear facts that support your situation.
- build good relationships with the people who make important decisions
- find and work with people who will support and stand up for the rights of disabled people
- understand how important dealing with local harassment issues is to organisations and partnerships
- provide training for organisations to help them understand the issue of harassment
- get involved in partnership working
- make careful use of the media

- try to influence decisions before they are made
- do not give up on making the decision makers aware of the harassment of disabled people



You can download a co-production toolkit from Independent Living in Scotland (ILIS). The toolkit is for disabled people. It gives you tips for connecting with public bodies.



It is available here:

www.ilis.co.uk/get-active/publications/co-production-toolkit

Making people aware of harassment of disabled people in your area

It is important to make people aware of harassment of disabled people.



This will help to improve the reporting and recording of the harassment of disabled people by public bodies.



Here are some useful questions to plan an awareness campaign



- What is going on in my area?
- What needs to change and why?
- What are the aims of the campaign?
- Who are the people we are trying to reach?

For example, the public, Members of the Scottish Parliament



- Do our messages need to be different for different people?
- What is our strategy (big plan)?
- Who can help us achieve our aims?

This could be other organisations that support disabled people. Or other groups of people that have had experience of hate crime.



- When should we campaign?
- How long should we do it for?
- How much money do we have to do it?
- How will we continue when the campaign is over?



Building relationships with your local councillor



Building relationships might be the best place to start with when trying to make people aware.



You may want to start with making Local councillors aware of the harassment of disabled people.

Local councillors represent the interests of local people on the council.



There are many ways to contact your local councillor.

You can:

- attend their local surgery. This means that you can speak to them directly.
- go to a local council meeting.
- contact your local authority.



Here is a useful website to get the details of your local councillor:

www.writetothem.com



Building relationships with local authorities and police.



You may want to contact your local authority to find out what they are doing to deal with the harassment of disabled people.



You may also want to contact the police about this.



You could also share the experience of the disabled people you work with.

Or you can invite people from local authorities and police to speak to the people you work with.

Using the media



Using the media is a powerful way to let people know about the harassment of disabled people.

It can also put pressure on the people who make decisions.



It is important to plan how you use the media to make it work with your other campaigning.

Social Media



Facebook and Twitter are types of **social media**. Social media means places where people can share information and news quickly.



Social media is easy to use.



Social media can get information out to a lot of people quickly.



Social media can be used to campaign for change.



A useful group on Facebook is the Disability Hate Crime Network. Their Facebook page is here:

www.facebook.com/groups/disabilityhatecrimenetwork/



Here are some other groups who are using social media for campaigning:

Avaaz:

www.avaaz.org

Hollaback:

www.ihollaback.org

Using the press



The press means things like newspapers and radio shows. You can let people know about the harassment of disabled people by getting in contact with them.

Press releases

A press release lets the newspapers know about your campaign.

Publishing a press release is a good way to get information out to the public.



Here are some tips for writing press releases:



- put the important information in the first paragraph
- always think about what people want to know and put this in the press release.
- use clear language and short words
- do not use jargon
- keep it short, about 500 words

This easy read was made by the Scottish Consortium for Inclusion Scotland.