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Unite the Union exposes the cost of workplace bullying

The world's biggest anti-bullying project today reveals that employers' failure to tackle the root causes of bullying in the workplace is costing the UK economy £13.75 billion a year.

The project also reveals that Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) workers are more likely to be targets of workplace bullying and harassment than other workers and are less likely to have a support network to help them through the experience. The report 'BME Employee Experiences of Workplace Bullying' is calling for better monitoring on anti-bullying activities, including a focus on the experiences of BME workers and the building of BME support structures involving colleagues, managers, and unions.

Cath Speight, Unite acting head of equalities said: "It is shocking that Black and Minority Ethnic workers are more likely to be targets of workplace bullying. Employers need to recognize that there are specific issues concerning BME employees and take action to stop this group of workers from being bullied."

The report's main author, Dr Sabir Giga from the University of Bradford said: "Bullying is impacting on Black Minority Ethnic workers' job satisfaction, promotion opportunities and health. We are calling on employers to develop a zero tolerance to bullying so that all workers are treated with dignity and respect."

The report 'The Costs of Workplace Bullying' estimates that in 2007 33.5m jobs were lost by UK organisations due to bullying related absenteeism, almost 200,000 employees would have left their jobs and the equivalent of 100m days productivity were lost as a result of bullying.

Cath Speight, Unite acting head of equalities said: Employers can no longer be in any doubt about the business case for tackling bullying. As well as the devastating impact on individuals, bullying has a negative impact on productivity as workers who suffer from bullying and those who witness it, experience low morale and are more likely to take time off or leave their jobs."

The Dignity at Work partnership project has also published its 'Action Pack' that offers solutions to employers and union representatives in tackling bullying. The Dignity at Work recommends that organisations adopt a zero tolerance approach to bullying and wants employers to work with trade unions to eradicate bullying. The project advocates a partnership approach when dealing with bullying.

Baroness Ann Gibson, Chair of the Dignity at Work Project said: "As a society we are paying too high a price for bullying. Workers that experience bullying are more likely to go off sick or leave and colleagues who witness bullying are also less likely to stick around. Employers that ignore bullying do so at huge costs."