

Glasgow Life

Working Well Together – Having a Difficult Conversation Guide

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Introduction

Informal resolution can be a helpful first step in addressing bullying or harassment at work. It allows individuals to raise concerns directly and seek a constructive change in behaviour without escalating to formal procedures. This approach can often lead to quicker, less confrontational outcomes and help preserve working relationships.

However, **no one should feel pressured** to take informal action if they are uncomfortable doing so. If you feel unsafe, anxious, or believe informal action will not lead to meaningful change, you are encouraged to speak with your manager or HR to explore alternative informal routes (e.g. mediation) or consider formal procedures.

Checklist: Preparing for and having a difficult Conversation

1. Reflect and Prepare

- Clarify what behaviour has affected you and how.
- Consider what outcome you're hoping for (e.g. an apology, change in behaviour).
- Choose a suitable time and private place for the conversation.
- If needed, speak to a trusted colleague, manager, or HR for support beforehand.

2. Approach with Respect

- Use "I" statements to express how you feel (e.g. *"I felt undermined when..."*).
- Avoid blaming or accusatory language.
- Stay calm and composed; focus on the impact, not the intent.

3. Be Clear and Specific

- Describe the behaviour factually (what was said/done, when, where).
- Explain how it made you feel and why it's problematic.
- Share what you'd like to see change going forward.

4. Listen and Allow Space

- Give the other person a chance to respond.
- Be open to hearing their perspective, but stay focused on your experience.
- If emotions run high, suggest pausing and revisiting the conversation later.

5. Agree on Next Steps

- If the conversation goes well, agree on what will change and how you'll both move forward.
- Consider a follow-up chat to check in on progress.
- If the issue persists or worsens, seek support from your manager or HR.

6. Document Briefly

- Make a short note of the conversation for your own records (date, key points, agreed actions).
- This can be helpful if further action is needed later.