

# UK workplace bullying claims jump 44% in past year to record high of over 800

The number of cases heard by the Employment Tribunal which contain allegations of bullying has increased 44% from 581 to a record high of 835 in the past 12 months\*, shows research by Fox & Partners, the employment and partnership law specialists.

Fox & Partners say this jump in bullying claims should be a “canary in the mine” moment for many organisations. It is a strong signal that many leadership teams are failing to address a growth in toxic work cultures. Old fashioned strategies for identifying and dealing with problematic behaviours are breaking down in changing working environments. Challenges with differing attitudes to flexible working can also result in conflict with managers.

A virtual working environment can result in novel patterns of bullying that are difficult to identify. For example:

- Cutting remarks being made on video calls that are difficult to address positively;
- Deliberately leaving colleagues out of remote meetings;
- Using messaging apps to gossip during colleagues' presentations.

## **Toxic work culture can lead to loss of talent**

A toxic workplace can lead to loss of talent. In addition, it can negatively impact employees' performance and well-being, with those being bullied likely to be less productive than their colleagues.

Fox & Partners says that senior managers should follow the guidance of relevant regulators such as the FCA and SRA in relation to their workplace culture. They stress that an unhealthy culture can cause significant harm to both businesses and their employees.

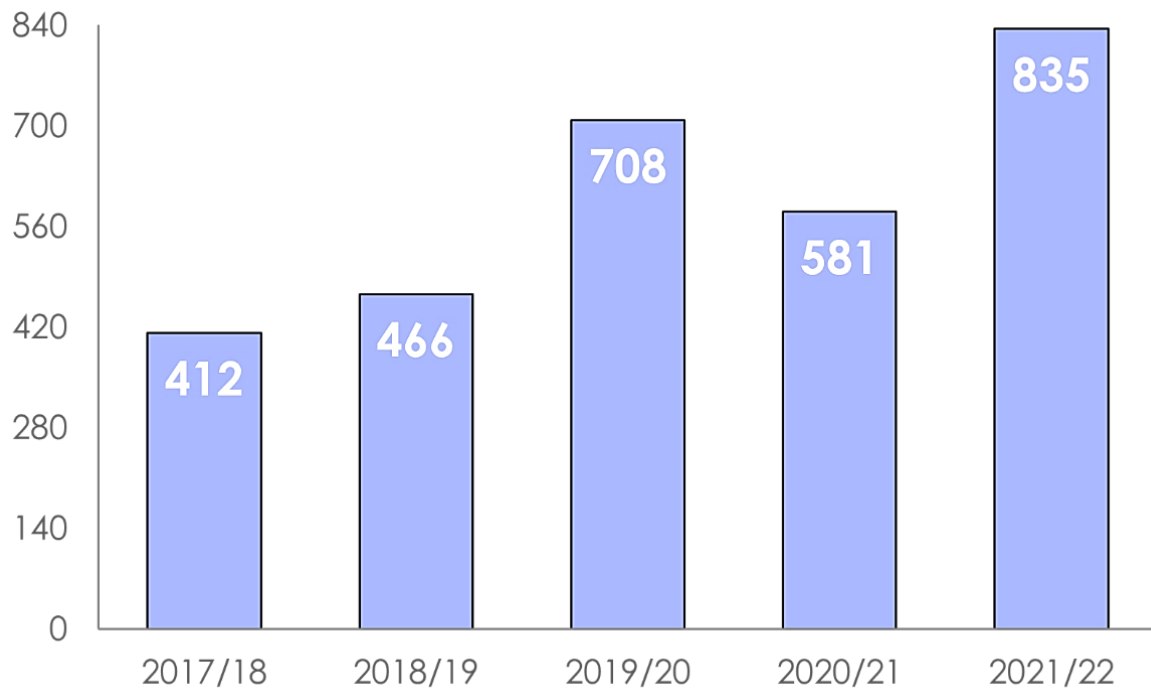
Within financial services, the FCA adds that a toxic workplace can also negatively impact consumers, participants in financial markets and markets themselves.

Fox & Partners adds that the rise in workplace bullying claims shows that employers should look to make improvements to develop positive work environments. Changes often need to be made at a systemic level, not merely on a case-by-case basis. This includes encouraging more effective and varied methods of communication, as well as giving senior staff training and guidelines on providing feedback to avoid misinterpretation.

Ivor Adair, Partner at Fox & Partners, says: “Tackling workplace bullying is no easy task, particularly in changing work environments. The record number of bullying claims is a worrying sign that some leadership teams have struggled to maintain healthy workplaces during the shift to hybrid working.”

“It is important for senior managers to ensure they are well placed to detect and address concerns from all levels of staff before conflict escalates. Employers should consider a suite of techniques that will effect lasting change, such as coaching, or more structured supervision and pastoral care programs. Employers must also be willing to enforce company policies to protect and support colleagues at risk, if workplace cultures are to be improved.”

**UK workplace bullying claims reach record high**



\*Data year end 31 March 2022, based on analysis of Employment Tribunal decisions

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