

Sexual harassment

Don't put up with it



Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

Sexual harassment

Don't put up with it

Sexual harassment is unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment is often dismissed by those not suffering from it as 'just a bit of fun' or 'a bit of harmless flirting'. In reality, it is a very specific form of sex discrimination and is against the law.

This leaflet sets out some of the actions you can take if you have suffered sexual harassment at work.

Any of the following may count as sexual harassment:

- indecent or suggestive remarks
- questions or comments about your sex life
- the display of pornography
- the circulation of obscene material (by email, for example)
- inappropriate touching
- requests or demands for sexual favours
- any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment.

Prolonged harassment can lead to serious health problems, including depression. Don't put up with this type of behaviour.

Take the following steps:

- tell a friend or trusted colleague what is happening
- ask the harasser to stop
- if the problem persists, ask the harasser to stop in writing, explaining that you find their behaviour objectionable
- report the harasser to your employer or trade union.

Report any harassment early in order to protect yourself and others.

Your employer should:

- take your complaint seriously and stop the harassment
- explain how they intend to deal with it
- speak to the person concerned about their behaviour

- make sure that you do not suffer any reprisals as a result of reporting the sexual harassment.

If you are not satisfied with your employer's response you can consider raising a formal grievance about the incident.

You can take your complaint to an employment tribunal where it will be heard under the Sex Discrimination Act. The law now says that, in most cases, you must raise a written grievance with your employer before you make a tribunal claim.

There are strict time limits for making an employment tribunal claim. You may need to do this within 3 months from the date of the last incident of harassment, so it is important to get advice as soon as possible.

For further information on sexual harassment and making a tribunal claim, visit the EOC website, call the EOC Helpline, or contact your union.

Sexual harassment

Don't put up with it

All employers have a duty to protect their employees from sexual harassment, and they can be held liable for the unlawful action of those who work in their organisation.

You could advise your employer that they can obtain information on dealing with sexual harassment from the EOC website.

For further information contact:

web: www.eoc.org.uk

email: info@eoc.org.uk

Helpline: **0845 601 5901**

Free, confidential and impartial advice and information on sex discrimination and equal pay

9am to 5pm Monday – Friday*

*Calls from BT landlines are charged at local rates. Calls may be monitored for training purposes

Interpreting service available through Language Line, when you call our Helpline

Typetalk service available on 18001 0845 601 5901

Equal Opportunities Commission
Arndale House, Arndale Centre
Manchester M4 3EQ



Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission