



Key messages for line managers responding to disclosures or reports of rape and sexual assault

What you can do

- 1.** Build an understanding of how rape and sexual assault can affect women and the workplace. This will enable you to better support victim-survivors and understand how it impacts their experience at work.
- 2.** Women may not say what's happening because they don't know how to report, or what support is available. If you suspect one of your team has experienced rape or sexual assault, you should start a conversation.
- 3.** Familiarise yourself with the signs that someone may have experienced rape or sexual assault. For example, a change in the quality of their work, or a change in behaviour.
- 4.** When starting a conversation, ensure you have a quiet and confidential space. You should create a safe environment by being open about the conversation without any form of judgement.
- 5.** If an employee chooses not to disclose or report, it's important to respect their decision.
- 6.** As a line manager, you may feel uncomfortable or worried about saying the wrong thing. The most important things you can do are to listen to the person, let them know that you believe them, and take their disclosure seriously.
- 7.** If a victim-survivor wants to make a formal complaint, it's good practice to provide information on the different ways to report, and as well outline what support is available in the workplace. You should also provide information about reporting to the police and reassure them that victimisation is not tolerated.
- 8.** If a victim-survivor doesn't want to formally report, it's good practice to keep a confidential record of the conversation, outline what support is available in the workplace and identify a time to check-in.

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9. In the workplace, rape and sexual assault may be considered a form a sexual harassment. It's important to familiarise yourself with the relevant policies and processes.
10. Risk assessments are an integral tool in preventing sexual harassment but also when responding to formal complaints or disclosures of rape and sexual assault. The Equality and Human Rights Commission advises undertaking risk assessments to ensure compliance with the preventative duty in the Worker Protection Act 2023.
11. It's good practice to work with the victim-survivor to identify their support needs. This may include access to flexible working, reducing their workload or offering special leave.
12. Have a list of local specialist support services that's easily accessible and signpost to appropriate organisations such as Rape Crisis centres, the Rape Crisis Scotland national helpline, Scottish Women's Rights Centre, the local Women's Aid group and SARCS.

What you need to know about rape and sexual assault

13. Rape and sexual assault are any behaviour of a sexual nature which is unwanted and that takes place without consent.
14. As the majority of victim-survivors are women, it's understood to be a consequence of gender inequality which creates harmful power imbalances.
15. Women from all backgrounds are affected by rape and sexual assault, irrespective of age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, education level, culture and socioeconomic demographic.
16. A victim-survivor is never to blame for being raped or sexually assaulted.
17. Most victim-survivors will not report for fear of being judged or not believed.
18. The trauma from rape and sexual assault can result in anxiety, depression, isolation, stress and fear.
19. Rape and sexual assault can have long term effects on victim-survivors, but the effects can differ depending on the person and the support they have.
20. Some victim-survivors find it difficult to recognise they have been raped or sexually assaulted, particularly if it happened in a relationship.



Equally Safe at Work is delivered by Close the Gap, Scotland's expert policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market participation.

Close the Gap www.closesthegap.org.uk