



## Key messages for line managers responding to sexual harassment

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### What you can do

- 1.** It's everyone's responsibility to prevent sexual harassment. Your organisation has a legal responsibility to respond to, and prevent sexual harassment, including third party harassment.
- 2.** Women affected by sexual harassment may not discuss what's happening because they don't know how to report, or what support is available. If you suspect one of your team is being sexually harassed, you should start a conversation.
- 3.** Familiarise yourself with the signs that someone may have experienced sexual harassment. 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 outlining what support is available in the workplace.
- 8.** If a victim-survivors 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. Risk assessments are an integral tool in preventing sexual harassment but also when responding to formal complaints or disclosures. The Equality and Human Rights Commission advises undertaking risk assessments to ensure compliance with the preventative duty in the Worker Protection Act.
10. It's good practice to work with the victim-survivor to identify their support needs.
11. 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, or Scottish Women's Right Centre.

## **What you need to know about sexual harassment**

12. Sexual harassment is unwanted, or unwelcomed behaviour of a sexual nature. This means unwanted touching, sexual comments, or displaying sexually graphic images.
13. It may not be intended to cause distress or harm, but if it makes someone feel uncomfortable or unsafe then it's sexual harassment.
14. Sexual harassment can also happen outside of working hours and/or the workplace. It doesn't just happen face-to-face, but also through email, text and online platforms.
15. Sexual harassment isn't just an issue between two people but a part of a wider problem with workplace culture, and gender inequality in the workplace.
16. Sexual harassment is widespread and women are most often the victim, and men the perpetrator.
17. Women don't usually report sexual harassment because they worry no one will believe them or that it will affect their job.
18. Sometimes women don't report because it's their line manager or another senior member of staff who is harassing them.
19. When women aren't valued in the workplace, it makes it harder for them to feel like they will be believed if they report sexual harassment.
20. Dismissing sexual harassment as 'just a joke' or 'banter' is harmful for everyone.



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

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