

EQUALLY SAFE AT
WORK



Key messages for
challenging and responding
to sexual harassment

These key messages are designed to support employers to communicate and engage with employees on workplace sexual harassment. They aim to provide information on sexual harassment to increase understanding among employees about what sexual harassment is, and how they have a role in preventing it.

They should be used alongside the sexual harassment learning and development resources, as well as your organisation's sexual harassment or violence against women policy.

What you can do

- 1.** It's everyone's responsibility to prevent sexual harassment.
- 2.** Your organisation has a legal responsibility to respond to, and prevent sexual harassment.
- 3.** 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.
- 4.** Familiarise yourself with the signs that someone may be experiencing sexual harassment. For example, a change in the quality of their work, or a change in behaviour.
- 5.** You can challenge sexual harassment by responding to disclosures or reports in a non-judgemental and supportive way.
- 6.** You can offer victim-survivors support that's available in the organisation or signpost to external specialist support services such as Scottish Women's Rights Centre and Rape Crisis Scotland.

What you need to know

- 7.** Sexual harassment is unwanted, or unwelcomed behaviour of a sexual nature. This means unwanted touching, sexual comments, or displaying sexually graphic images.
- 8.** It may not be intended to cause distress or harm, but if it makes someone feel uncomfortable or unsafe then it's sexual harassment.
- 9.** Sexual harassment can also happen outside of working hours and/or the workplace. It also doesn't just happen face to face, but also through email, text and online platforms.
- 10.** 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.
- 11.** Sexual harassment is widespread and women are most often the victim, and men the perpetrator.
- 12.** Women don't usually report sexual harassment because they worry no one will believe them or that it will affect their job.
- 13.** Sometimes women don't report because it's their line manager or another senior member of staff who is harassing them.
- 14.** When women aren't valued in the workplace, it makes it harder for them to feel like they will be believed.
- 15.** Dismissing sexual harassment as 'just a joke' or 'banter' is harmful for everyone.

Close the Gap works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and unions to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's inequality at work.

Close the Gap
166 Buchanan Street
Glasgow
G1 2LW

0141 572 4730

www.equallysafeatwork.scot

info@closethegap.org.uk

www.closethegap.org.uk

Twitter: @closethepaygap

LinkedIn: Close the Gap



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