

Creating a sexual harassment policy

As an employer, you might decide to create a policy on sexual harassment.

This can help you take steps to identify risks and to prevent sexual harassment.

Alternatively, you could include sexual harassment in a policy on bullying or discrimination.

Consulting on your policy

If you create a specific policy, you should do this in consultation with either:

- any recognised trade unions
- other worker representatives, where there's no trade union

[Find out more about consulting employees and representatives](#)

What to include in the policy

A sexual harassment policy should include:

- an explanation of what sexual harassment is
- a statement that says you will not tolerate sexual harassment
- what someone should do if they experience or witness sexual harassment
- how managers should deal with sexual harassment complaints
- how you will deal with sexual harassment from third parties, for example customers or clients
- support that's available for anyone affected by sexual harassment
- how you will handle time off because of sexual harassment
- your approach to assessing and managing risks of sexual harassment

An explanation of sexual harassment

In your policy, explain what sexual harassment means. It's important that people understand the range of behaviour that could be sexual harassment. It can be useful to give examples.

You might want to link to other policies, for example whistleblowing, bullying and social media policies.

A statement that says you will not tolerate sexual harassment

Set out your organisation's position on sexual harassment. You should make it clear that:

- you will not tolerate sexual harassment
- complaints will be taken seriously and not be ignored
- this applies to everyone in the organisation, regardless of role or status

What someone should do if they experience or witness sexual harassment

Your policy should refer to either:

- your usual grievance procedure
- a separate procedure for sexual harassment complaints, if you have one

Include a range of options for who to report sexual harassment to. This is so people have a choice, depending on who they feel most able to talk to. Options could include:

- their line manager
- a more senior manager
- someone who is specially trained to deal with sexual harassment complaints
- their trade union representative, if they're a member

You should explain that someone can choose to either:

- raise a problem informally
- raise a grievance – this is where someone makes a formal complaint

You should make it clear that:

- usually, someone making a complaint can choose if they want it to be dealt with informally or formally
- some situations might be too serious to deal with informally

How managers should deal with sexual harassment complaints

This should mainly be covered by referring to:

- your usual grievance procedure
- a separate procedure for sexual harassment complaints, if you have one

You should explain what will happen if a complaint is upheld. 'Upheld' means the person investigating the complaint decides that the complaint is valid.

How you will deal with third party sexual harassment

In your policy, set out how workers should report sexual harassment from third parties. For example, customers, clients, service users and members of the public.

Explain how you will deal with any issues. This should include what steps you could take to prevent sexual harassment happening again. You will not be able to use your usual disciplinary procedure if the person accused of sexual harassment does not work for you.

Support for anyone affected by sexual harassment

Give details of help and support that's available to anyone affected by sexual harassment. This includes:

- people who have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment
- managers dealing with sexual harassment complaints
- anyone accused of sexual harassment

For example:

- support available through work, for example an employee assistance programme (EAP) if you have one
- outside sources of support

For advice on what you could include, find out more about [specialist help and support](#).

How you will handle time off because of sexual harassment

Say how you will handle any time off that results from sexual harassment at work. This might include:

- sickness absence
- appointments for specialist support

Usually, this should be paid time off. It should not count against an employee. For example, you should not count this towards any [absence trigger points](#).

Assessing and managing risks

Information about assessing and managing risks of sexual harassment could be either:

- part of your sexual harassment policy
- in separate guidance for managers

You need to have a process for managers to decide what steps to take to prevent sexual harassment.

For more advice on this, find out more about [preventing sexual harassment](#).

Get more advice and support

If you have any questions about creating a policy, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).

Acas also provides:

- [tailored support for employers](#)
- [training on dealing with unacceptable behaviours at work](#)