

Witnessing sexual harassment

If you see someone being sexually harassed at work, you could try to stop it if you feel it's safe to do so.

After it's happened, you can:

- support a complaint made by the person who experienced the sexual harassment
- report what you've seen or experienced
- give evidence as a witness, for example as part of a grievance procedure
- make a sexual harassment complaint yourself

If you're making a complaint yourself, you do not need the permission of the person who's been sexually harassed.

You must not be [victimised](#) if you make or support a complaint, or act as a witness. This means you must not be:

- stopped from giving evidence
- treated unfairly because you've made a complaint, given evidence or supported a complaint

Important: From 6 April 2026, sexual harassment will become a 'qualifying disclosure' under whistleblowing law. This means whistleblowers making a sexual harassment disclosure will be protected from detriment and unfair dismissal.

Make a note of what's happened

It's a good idea to make a note of what's happened. This should include dates, times and names, including any other witnesses.

Writing things down can be especially helpful if you find talking about the experience distressing.

If you recorded what happened

There are risks involved with making recordings, for example on your phone. This is a complicated area of the law.

In a sexual harassment complaint to your employer, a recording might not be allowed as evidence. For example if:

- your employer has a policy that workers must not make recordings at work without permission
- your employer has a policy that making a secret recording at work is a disciplinary issue
- your secret recording breaks data protection laws

If a complaint leads to an employment tribunal, the tribunal might allow a recording as evidence in some circumstances. It will depend on your reasons for making it. A possible example might be that you made it because there was no other way to get evidence. But the tribunal will decide on a case-by-case basis.

Deciding whether to report it or make a complaint

You should talk to the person who's experienced sexual harassment to see if they want your support.

You might also want to talk to someone else to help you decide what to do. This could be:

- someone you trust at work, for example a colleague or manager
- a trade union representative, if you're a member of a trade union
- someone at work who's been trained to advise people who are considering making this kind of complaint
- [specialist advice](#)

You might decide to either:

- report what you've seen
- make a complaint yourself because what you've seen has violated your dignity or created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for you

If you're making a complaint yourself, you do not need the permission of the person who's been sexually harassed.

Reporting what you've seen or making a complaint

If you choose to tell your employer, talk with them as soon as possible to try and resolve the problem. [Find out more about talking to your employer about a problem.](#)

If talking to your employer does not resolve the issue or if you think it's too serious, you can [raise a grievance](#). This is if you're making a formal complaint yourself.

Your employer might have their own policy on sexual harassment. If they do, look at the policy to check what you should do. It might tell you who to send your complaint to, for example someone in your organisation with specialist training.

You might also want to speak to a trade union representative, if you're a member. They may be able to support you in making a complaint.

If your problem is not resolved, you can consider making a claim to an [employment tribunal](#).

If you make a report or complaint a long time after an incident took place, your employer should still take it seriously.

Giving evidence

You might be asked to make a witness statement. This could be part of either:

- your organisation's [grievance procedure](#)
- your employer's specific sexual harassment or bullying and harassment procedure, if they have one

If you're uncomfortable about doing this, the person investigating should talk to you and try to resolve any concerns you have.

[Find out more about being a witness](#)

Giving evidence anonymously

If you're making a witness statement, you can ask for it to be anonymous. Your employer does not have to agree and there can be disadvantages.

For example, your evidence might not be taken as seriously. It might have to be backed up by someone else who's willing to be named.

Keeping your identity secret cannot be guaranteed. For example, if the case goes to an employment tribunal, you might be asked to give evidence in person.

How the law protects you

The law (Equality Act 2010) protects you from being victimised because you've supported someone else's complaint. This means you must not be:

- stopped from giving evidence
- treated less favourably as a result of making a complaint, giving evidence or supporting a complaint

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[Find out more about victimisation](#)

Contact the Acas helpline

If you have any questions about sexual harassment at work, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).