

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

### What is Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is not a laughing matter. It can include: someone making degrading, abusive remarks or gestures; being leered or stared at; being subjected to sexual jokes and sexual propositions; having to listen to comments about personal sexual activity or sexual preference; and experiencing unwanted touching and bodily contact.

Although Sexual Harassment happens everywhere, it is very common at a woman's place of work, which can make it especially distressing and difficult to deal with.

Sexual Harassment causes a great deal of stress and hostility in the work place, and over a length of time it can lead to physical and emotional problems. For example: headaches; nausea; cystitis; depression; anxiety; sleeping problems; nightmares; eating problems; loss of self-confidence, self-esteem and/or self-worth.

It is important for you to remember that it is not your fault and you are not being unreasonable not to like it. The harasser is to blame and is abusing their position of trust and power. Often you may not be the only one they are harassing.

It is important that you speak to someone who will take your feelings seriously. Sexual Harassment can be a very upsetting experience and many women, when they object, are told by their harasser that they lack a sense of humour, or "it's only a bit of fun".

Rather than putting up with the situation or reporting the harassment, it is a fact that many women leave their job and look for work elsewhere. However, with some support and information, there are things you can do.

### What can I do?

- Tell the harasser to stop. Let them know you dislike their behaviour. You could ask another work colleague to do this on your behalf. You

can let them know in writing that their behaviour is unreasonable (keep a copy of the letter if you do this).

- If you want to confront the harasser, take someone with you e.g. a union representative (if you have one), or a senior member of staff.
- Confide in someone at work you can trust. You may find out someone else is, or has been, harassed by the same person.
- Keep a note of dates and times of each incident, and details of what happened and what was said.
- Report the harassment to someone in authority - this can be important, even if no action is taken against the harasser, in case you ever want to take legal action for injury to feelings.
- If there is no one at work you can approach, you can contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Equal Opportunities Commission, a Law Centre or someone at the Centre for information and support.
- If the harasser touches you on an intimate part of your body you can report them to the police for indecent assault.

Most organisations and companies have proper procedures for dealing with complaints. If your employer reacts badly and you are sacked, this could be "unfair dismissal". If you have to leave because nothing is done about the harassment, this could be "constructive dismissal". In both situations, you can take the case to an industrial tribunal.

No one should have to put up with unwanted advances towards them at work. You can get help to deal with it.

## HELPLINE SUPPORT

You can telephone our helpline for support or information on 01738 630965 We also have a 24 hour answering machine, so that at any other time messages can be left and will be returned discreetly, as soon as possible.

Write to: WRASAC P & K, P.O. Box 7570, Perth, PH2 1BY

Email [info@perthshirerapecrisis.org](mailto:info@perthshirerapecrisis.org)

## USEFUL CONTACTS

Samaritans

(01738) 626 666

Genito-Urinary Clinic	(01738) 473 220
Police Family Protection Unit	(01738) 892 911
Perthshire Women's Aid	(01738) 639 043
Victim Support	(01738) 567 171
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	(0141) 331 2726
Citizens Advice Bureau	(01738) 624 301
Bristol Crisis Service for Women	(0117) 925 1119
Childline	(0800 1111)