



Sexual harassment at work

Awareness

Sexual harassment in any guise is completely unacceptable. It is your basic human right to be treated with respect at work. But how do you know when friendly flirtation turns into harassment? Learn how to identify it, and then put a stop to it.

There is never a reason to tolerate sexual harassment. Inappropriate sexual behaviour is not only unacceptable, but also illegal. You can use your company's complaint procedures and the law to protect you against such behaviour. In order to do so, you should clearly understand what is meant by the term "sexual harassment" and know exactly what to do if you are victimised. How to recognise the signs of abuse making yourself emotionally and practically available.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or any verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

There are two types of sexual harassment.

- 01 Quid pro quo** (meaning "this for that") which occurs when a manager or someone in a position of authority requests sex, or a sexual relationship, in exchange for refraining from punishment, or in exchange for promotions or increases.
- 02 Hostile work environment** through the presence of demeaning or sexual photographs, jokes or threats. The inappropriate behaviour is pervasive and creates an intimidating and offensive work environment.

Examples of such conduct are:

Verbal: Unwelcome sexual advances, offensive flirtations, suggestive remarks or comments; propositions or pressure for sexual activity; jokes of a sexual nature.

Non-verbal: Pornographic or suggestive pictures, screen savers, or objects; making sexually suggestive gestures; whistling; all the "verbal" examples mentioned above if delivered via e-mail or in writing.

Physical: Unwanted contact like touching, patting, pinching, kissing or brushing against your body, assault or rape.



Most cases of sexual harassment are not reported. People don't know exactly what sexual harassment is, feel too ashamed, or consider the risks of reporting outweighs the benefits. Others hope that it will simply go away if they ignore it. Unfortunately, it is unlikely to stop without intervention, and staying in the situation will compromise your wellbeing.