

How to prevent harassment



There are five steps you can take to prevent harassment in our organisation.

1. Formal harassment policy.

The first step is to create a formal policy that opposes harassment. The types of items it would include are:

- ✓ A statement of commitment from senior management in which you explicitly oppose harassment in your organisation.
- ✓ A statement that harassment will not be tolerated.
- ✓ Some examples of unacceptable behaviour such as the ones featured in Module 2.
- ✓ A statement explaining that harassment may be treated as a disciplinary offence
- ✓ The steps your organisation will take in preventing harassment
- ✓ The procedure that a harassed member of staff should follow in reporting the incident.
- ✓ Assurance that all harassment complaints will be dealt with utmost confidentiality
- ✓ Reference to grievance procedures both informal and formal
- ✓ Reference to investigation procedures including timescales for action
- ✓ Reference to disciplinary procedures, including timescales for action counselling and support availability
- ✓ An assertion that your organisation will protect any employee subject to victimisation
- ✓ How the policy is to be implemented, reviewed and monitored.

To gain support and credibility with staff, you should involve them in its development.

2. Set a good example

The second, step is to practice what you preach. The behaviour of senior staff in your organisation is as important as any formal policy.

3. Maintain fair procedures

The third step is to maintain fair procedures for dealing promptly with complaints.

Coming forward to raise a complaint can be intimidating, so it is important that steps are taken to ensure staff know the process to follow if they have concerns about the way they (or their colleagues) are being treated. They need to be confident that making a complaint will not result in further intimidation or victimisation for themselves or anyone else involved.

The right to be accompanied

Complainants should be aware that they and the person about whom they are complaining have the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union representative of their choice at a grievance hearing - as set out in the Employment Relations Act 1999



4. Set standards of behaviour

The fourth step is to set standards of behaviour for all staff throughout your organisation.

This is best effected through a staff handbook or induction procedures. But, whatever the method of communication, all staff should be clear about the standards of behaviour expected and their responsibilities to others.

5. Fairly, confidentially and sensitively

The final stage is to let staff know that complaints of harassment will be dealt with fairly, confidentially and sensitively. This will reassure staff that they will be treated sympathetically by your organisation, whatever their complaint.

Beyond the normal working environment

It is important to understand that your organisation's responsibilities for staff wellbeing extend to any environment where work-related activities take place. This includes social gatherings organised by your employer such as Christmas parties or outings.

Individual responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to behave in a way that supports a hostile-free working environment. They should play their part in making the organisation's policy a reality and be prepared to take appropriate action if they observe or have evidence that someone else is being harassed.