



Understanding and addressing sexual harassment at work

Your guide



Your guide to understanding and addressing sexual harassment at work

This guide has been created to help you understand, recognise, and address sexual harassment at work. Sexual harassment has no place at Highland Hospice. Whether you have experienced it, witnessed it, or are supporting someone who has, this guide is here to help. It outlines what sexual harassment is, how to identify it, and the steps you can take to ensure you and others remain safe, respected, and supported.

Why this matters

Sexual harassment is harmful. It affects your safety, wellbeing, and confidence and can damage relationships and careers. We know it's often downplayed, but it is never acceptable. You deserve to feel safe, respected, and valued at work.

What this guide covers

- What sexual harassment looks like.
- How to recognise the signs.
- How to support colleagues and respond appropriately.
- Where to find help and resources.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that violates your dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Even if the person didn't intend harm, it can still be harassment.

Examples

- Sexual comments, jokes, or gestures.
- Leering, staring, or suggestive looks.
- Unwanted flirting or advances.
- Sending sexual messages or images.
- Intrusive questions about your private life.
- Touching without consent such as hugging, brushing against you, or worse.
- Displaying sexual images or material.
- Threats, intimidation, or promises in exchange for sexual favours.
- Serious offences like stalking, indecent exposure, or up-skirting.



A single incident can be sexual harassment. It can happen at work, at social events, online, or through third parties like patients or visitors.

Recognising the impact

Experiencing sexual harassment can be traumatic. Many people don't report it because they fear being judged, ignored, or retaliated against. Signs someone may be struggling include:

- Withdrawal from team activities.
- Increased absences or changes in behaviour.
- Visible stress, anxiety, or loss of confidence.
- Physical signs like fatigue or tension.

If you suspect sexual harassment

Start with empathy. You might say:

- “I've noticed you seem quieter lately, how are you feeling?”
- “Is there anything happening at work that's worrying you?”
- “I'm here if you want to talk.”

Listen without judgment. Believe them. Don't minimise their experience or suggest “it could have been worse.” Sometimes, being heard is the most important first step.

If you experience sexual harassment

- You are not to blame. What happened is not your fault.
- Talk to someone you trust, a colleague, manager, or HR.
- Keep evidence such as notes, emails, messages, dates, and witnesses.
- Report it—through the Bullying and Harassment Policy. If it's a crime, contact Police Scotland.
- Seek support through available resources, occupational health, Health Heroes, or external organisations.



Support available

- NHS 24: Call 111
- Police Scotland: 101 (or 999 in emergencies)
- Rape Crisis Scotland: 08088 010302
- Samaritans: 116 123
- Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)
- Health Heroes: 0800 3 58 48 58

For managers

- Lead by example, make it clear sexual harassment will not be tolerated.
- Create a safe space for staff to speak up.
- Take disclosures seriously and act promptly.
- Promote Equity & Diversity and Active Bystander training completion.
- Take steps to improve appropriate and safe inclusion.

Our commitment

Sexual harassment is unacceptable. If you speak up, you will be listened to and supported. Together, we can create a workplace where everyone feels safe and respected.

Further information

You can find the Sexual Harassment Policy, along with the Grievance Policy, on the G-Drive and the staff intranet. If you're unsure how to access them, your line manager or a member of the HR team will be happy to help.



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