

## [Information Sheet - Institute of Welfare](#)

### **How to Stop Sexual Harassment**

#### **What is sexual harassment?**

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature. Examples of sexual harassment include comments of a sexual nature, viewing pornography in sight of others, telling sexually explicit stories, inappropriate touching or brushing up against someone and the latest form of sexual harassment is the sending of lewd e-mails or text messages.

The term 'Unwelcome Behaviour' is very important when establishing whether sexual harassment has taken place. To be termed 'unwelcome' the claimant may need to show that they discouraged the behaviour, making it clear to the perpetrator that such behaviour is unacceptable. The defendant may otherwise claim there was mutual flirting going on.

#### **Steps you can take**

- In the first instance make it clear to the perpetrator that the behaviour is unacceptable. At this point you can either inform someone in authority or wait to see if it happens again.
- Inform the perpetrator of your feelings in front of a witness.
- Avoid being alone with the perpetrator. Although you have a right to be protected without needing to avoid people.
- Keep a record of any incident, including 'what happened, who it involved, when and details of any witnesses'.
- Inform your line manager. Your employer has a legal obligation to take action to stop sexual harassment. If the perpetrator is your line manager then speak to his boss or contact your union (if applicable) or ACAS the conciliation organisation. Keep records of all correspondence and meetings concerning your grievance.
- Take any legal action within three months of the incident (or the conclusion of any investigation your employer has undertaken). You can take legal action even if the harassment has stopped.

#### **'What if I've already left my job?'**

If you left your job because sexual harassment made it unbearable and your employer failed to take action. Then you may still be able to take action against your employer for constructive unfair dismissal. However, there is a time constraint and you will need to show that you took steps to stop the behaviour and that your employer was aware of your grievance.

**Employment legislation is there to protect you from unwelcome  
behaviour. Do not accept it, act now.**

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