

Sexual harassment at work

IWGB Training

Overview

- **Introductions**
 - Name, pronouns
 - House-keeping
- **What is sexual harassment?**
 - What does the law say?
 - A union issue?
- **Supporting survivors**
 - Impacts of harassment and abuse
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- **What can unions do?**
 - Overview
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What is sexual harassment?

“Any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.” - Equality Act 2010.

- ❑ It doesn’t matter if it was intentional or not; it may be unintentional.
- ❑ It doesn’t have to be personal or directed at you; it is about the environment created.
- ❑ It doesn’t have to be repeated; it may be a one-off.

What can it look like?

- An indecent or sexually suggestive comment.
- An unwanted comment about someone's appearance, sex life, sexuality.
- Persistent flirting.
- Pressuring someone to engage in activity of a sexual nature, e.g. nudity.
- Making unwanted advances, invasions of personal space, inappropriate touching.
- Managers making work opportunities conditional upon a close relationship.
- Displaying pornography in work spaces, including online, e.g. work Whatsapp chats.
- Not seeking consent, willingly making others feel uncomfortable.

Other examples?

What does the law say?

For those classified as WORKERS (i.e. NOT agency, subcontracted, self employed):

Equality Act 2010 protects workers and employees from discrimination and harassment that relates to any protected characteristic.

For everyone:

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 puts a responsibility on employers for the wellbeing of everyone on their premises and who is affected by their 'work activities'.

Criminal laws prohibit sexual assault, stalking, malicious communications (e.g. an unwelcome sexually explicit email).

A union issue?



- **Widespread**
 - 2 out of 3 women have experienced SH at work.
- **Often linked to imbalance of power**
 - E.g. Perpetrator exploiting a senior position.
- **Correlation between casualisation and sexual harassment**
 - Less likely to be union members or have employment rights).
 - Laws provide little protection for many.
- **Very under-reported**
 - 4 out of 5 do not report to their employer; just 1% report to a union rep.
 - Avenues for reporting to employers are often non-existent or inadequate.
 - Unions can and should play an important role here!

Source: *Still just a bit of banter?* (TUC report, 2016)

Supporting Survivors

Impacts of harassment & abuse?

Confusion

Isolation

Numbness

Guilt

Flashbacks

PTSD

Dissociation

Denial

Shame

Anger

Self
doubt

Anxiety

Distrust

Handling a disclosure

- ❑ Sensitivity, empathy, non-judgmental.
- ❑ Respect confidentiality.
- ❑ Ask what would make them feel safe and what they want to happen.
- ❑ Be honest about what the union can do.
- ❑ Seek advice and support (branch officials, union staff, legal department...)
- ❑ Signpost them to other organisations for support if needed, e.g. counselling.
- ❑ Look after yourself, don't handle the case alone.



UCU Checklist for members: 'What to do if you are being harassed'

- ▶ don't think it's your fault or that you "asked for it";
- ▶ keep a log of when, where it occurred, what was said and done;
- ▶ seek support from your union rep;
- ▶ speak to other people at work and find out if they have the same problem from the harasser;
- ▶ if the harasser is a supervisor or manager, keep records of your job evaluations, assignments and promotions and so on;
- ▶ speak to the harasser in the company of someone else (ideally your union rep). Be specific about what you do not like and demand that it stops; and
- ▶ if you don't want to speak to the harasser yourself, ask someone else to do so, or consider writing a letter. It is a difficult thing to do, but can often prove very effective.

What can unions do?

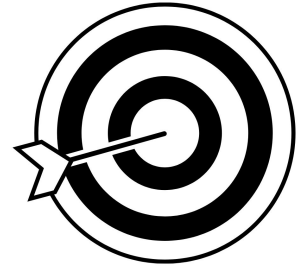
What can unions do?

- Listen and affirm when survivors come forward.
- Signpost & give legal advice.
- Spread awareness through trainings & resources.
- Be an avenue for reporting.
- Collect testimonies to use as evidence (with consent).
- Be a space for peer support.
- Be a collective voice for workers in an industry, e.g. publicly calling out harassers, bringing issue into conversation.
- Campaign for equality and an end to toxic workplace cultures.



Campaigns: Aim?

Important to identify demands & aims in collaboration with survivors.



These may include:

- Raising awareness of issue and avenues for reporting within industry.
- Harasser to issue apology or be removed from workplace.
- Employer to be investigated or shut down.
- Employer to provide financial compensation.
- Employer to implement policy for reporting & handling harassment cases.
- Establishing an independent regulatory body to oversee good practice.
- Putting pressure on existing organisations to address the issues (Y/A!)
- Ensure training is incorporated into teacher training - could develop training module.

Campaigns: Actions

- Awareness raising through resources, articles, trainings.
- Issuing public statements in press, social media, industry publications.
- Encouraging student boycotts of certain schools, organisations.
- Strikes & boycotts by workers.
- Other ideas?



Questions & discussion points