

## WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual Harassment is not a laughing matter. It can include: someone making degrading, abusive remarks or gestures; being leered or stared at; being subjected to sexual jokes and sexual propositions; having to listen to comments about personal sexual activity or sexual preference; and, experiencing unwanted touching and bodily contact.

Although Sexual Harassment happens everywhere, it is very common at a woman's place of work, which can make it especially distressing and difficult to deal with. This leaflet takes a look at steps you can take and some general advice if you, or someone you know, is being Sexually Harassed at work.

Sexual Harassment causes a great deal of stress and hostility in the work place, and over a length of time it can lead to physical and emotional problems. For example: headaches; nausea; cystitis; depression; anxiety; sleeping problems; nightmares; eating problems; loss of self-confidence, self-esteem and/or self-worth.

It is important for you to remember that it is not your fault and you are not being unreasonable not to like it. The harasser is to blame and is abusing their position of trust and power. Often you may not be the only one they are harassing.

It is important that you speak to someone who will take your feelings seriously. Sexual Harassment can be a very upsetting experience and many women, when they object, are told by their harasser that they lack a sense of humour, or "it's only a bit of fun".

Rather than putting up with the situation or reporting the harassment, it is a fact that many women leave their job and look for work elsewhere. However, with some support and information, there are things you can do.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

1. Tell the harasser to stop. Let them know you dislike their behaviour. You could ask another work colleague to do this on your behalf. You can let them know in writing that their behaviour is unreasonable (keep a copy of the letter if you do this).
2. If you want to confront the harasser take someone with you e.g. a union representative (if you have one), or a senior member of staff.
3. Confide in someone at work you can trust. You may find out someone else is, or has been, harassed by the same person.
4. Keep a note of dates and times of each incident, and details of what happened and what was said.
5. Report the harassment to someone in authority - this can be important, even if no action is taken against the harasser, in case you ever want to take legal action for injury to feelings.
6. If there is no one at work you can approach, you can contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Equal Opportunities Commission, a Law Centre or this Centre for information and support.
7. If the harasser touches you on an intimate part of your body you can report them to the police for indecent assault.

Most organisations and companies have proper procedures for dealing with complaints. If your employer reacts badly and you are sacked, this could be "unfair dismissal". If you have to leave because nothing is done about the harassment, this could be "constructive dismissal". In both situations, you can take the case to an industrial tribunal.

No one should have to put up with unwanted advances towards them at work. You **can** get help to deal with it.

## USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Equal Opportunities Unit	(01382) 438831
Citizens' Advice Bureau	(01382) 227171
Samaritans	(08457) 909090
Genito-Urinary Clinic	(01382) 425542
Police (Family Protection Unit)	(01382) 665117

## LEAFLETS AVAILABLE

Sexual harassment at work.

Information about the police and court.

Information for friends and family of survivors.

Information for survivors of rape or sexual assault.

Information for adult survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.

Information for women who would like to volunteer.

Information for workers.

Information on ritual abuse for survivors and supporters.

Survivors and Flashbacks.

Survivors and Self-Harm - Self-Injury.

Resources and Contacts.

W.R.A.S.A.C Service Information.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

P.O. Box 83, Dundee, DD1 1YN

**Helpline:** (01382) 201291 **Textphone:** (01382) 226936  
Monday 12pm-2pm, Tuesday 10am-12pm, Thursday 2pm-4pm  
Wednesday and Friday 7pm - 9pm  
Answering machine at all other times

**Business Line:** (01382) 205556

**Email:** [wrasac@btconnect.com](mailto:wrasac@btconnect.com)

# WOMEN'S RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE

**A free & confidential service**

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK