



Sexual Harassment – A Health and Safety Issue!



Sexual Harassment is not an innocent act. It is not 'banter'. It is not 'fun' or 'welcome'. It is an unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which 'violates a person's dignity' or 'creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment'. Sexual Harassment is expressly outlawed by section 26(2) of the Equality Act 2010.

The conduct includes inappropriate touching, sexualised comments and jokes, downloading or displaying sexual or pornographic images, treating someone less favourably because they rejected sexual advances etc.

The health consequences for the individual can lead to long term, serious physical and mental ill health. Women have been campaigning to eradicate sexual harassment from workplaces and society for decades. Women have campaigned and have held education events, challenging our work colleagues and the most progressive of our male colleagues supported us. It took years and the introduction of legislation for employers and many of their employees to take the issue seriously.

The Equality Act has been in place since 2010, and other discrimination legislation before that. However, as we have seen in the news there are still workplaces where it is thought of, as an acceptable way to treat people. It is surprising that some of our elected representatives in parliament act in such a disgusting way. Trade Unions have negotiated and supported the introduction of work place policies and procedures, which clearly explain what acceptable behaviour is and what will not be tolerated.

A recent Hazards Magazine reports on <http://www.hazards.org/violence/notok.htm>

As the Hazards Magazine article says 'sexual harassment is an everyday fact of working life for many women' and 'most cases go unreported'.

It is an act of 'violence and power', it is unacceptable, it is against the law and it should not be tolerated! The HSE have a booklet on preventing workplace harassment and violence, which explains the employer's duties to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/preventing-workplace-harassment.pdf>

If anyone is experiencing sexual harassment at work then in the first place contact your workplace trade union representative. If you are unable to do this then contact me at janet@gmhazards.org.uk or 0161 636 7558



Women
make great
Safety Reps



Help make
your workplace
better