

# Welfare Awareness Topic: Sexual Harassment

**Overview** – *Sexual Harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, that makes someone feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated, or is meant to make them feel that way. You don't need to have previously objected to someone's behaviour for it to be considered unwanted.*

**Under the Equality Act 2010, sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination.** This means the law says it is sexual harassment if the behaviour is either intended to, or has the effect of violating your dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. People are legally protected from sexual harassment in certain places- like at work, on transport, and at schools, colleges and universities.

Victims and survivors of sexual harassment are sometimes told that they are being 'too sensitive' or that they 'cant take a joke', but **sexual harassment is never funny, and should not be happening.** Unwanted sexual behaviour can happen in person, on the phone, by text, email or online. The harasser and the victim can be of any gender. It includes a wide range of behaviours, for example<sup>1</sup>:

- Sexual comments or noises – for example, catcalling or wolf-whistling, or sexual gestures.
- Leering, staring or suggestive looks. This can include looking someone up and down.
- Sexual 'jokes', innuendos or suggestive comments.
- Unwanted sexual advances or flirting, including sexual requests or asking for sexual favours
- Sending emails or texts with sexual content – for example, unwanted 'sexts' or 'dick pics'.
- Sexual posts or contact on social media.
- Intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life, or someone discussing their own sex life
- Commenting on someone's body, appearance or what they're wearing, or spreading sexual rumours
- Standing close to someone.
- Displaying images of a sexual nature.
- Unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature – for example, brushing up against someone or hugging, kissing or massaging them.
- Stalking.
- Indecent exposure, or taking a photo or video under another person's clothing – what is known as 'upskirting'.

By law, it is the person receiving the sexual behaviour who decides if it is unwanted. It doesn't matter if other people think the behaviour is okay, or if it is commonplace. The incident can be one off or repeated, and even if the behaviour was welcomed or not objected in the past doesn't mean that it can't become unwanted. Unwanted sexual behaviour doesn't need to be intentionally directed at the victim or survivor, it can be something they witness or overhear.

## Article/Source / Find out more

- Rape Crisis have [support and resources for if you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence](#) of any kind, whether it was recently or a long time, they will listen to you and believe you- get help [here](#).
- [Galop](#) have support and helplines for anyone in the UK who is LGBT+ and has experienced domestic abuse or hate crime. [The Proud Trust](#) have resources for LGBT+ young people, and advice on staying safe.
- [Citizens Advice](#) have a page with more info about Sexual Harassment, and who to contact if you are worried.
- [ACAS](#) also have a page with information about sexual harassment, and what to do if you have been sexually harassed at work.
- At BPP we take all allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct seriously, we have a detailed [sexual harassment and misconduct policy](#) which outlines our duty to ensure that students can study and socialise in a safe environment, both physically in centre, and in virtual spaces of the University online. We seek to maintain confidentiality wherever possible to ensure any reporting learner raising a concern feels safe and protected.

## Support

If you would like to talk to the safeguarding team about anything you have just read, we will listen without judgement and signpost you to support. If you would like to talk to a member of the Safeguarding Team then please get in touch: [safeguarding@bpp.com](mailto:safeguarding@bpp.com)

