



New Dynamics

Policies and practice

Anti-harassment policy: prevention and response

Build a clear policy with practical prevention, accessible reporting and a fair response process.

Practical guidance · Worked examples · Printable worksheet

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Read in order for the full approach, or use the linked contents to find a section. The final worksheet gives you space to record decisions and next steps.

Build a clear policy with practical prevention, accessible reporting and a fair response process. This practical guide to anti-harassment policy brings together a step-by-step approach, illustrative examples, a reusable worksheet and answers to common questions. Start with the section closest to your current challenge, then use the working session to turn the guidance into a clear next action.

Define scope and responsibilities

An anti-harassment policy should explain unacceptable behaviour, prevention responsibilities and how concerns are handled. Cover work-related settings that matter to your organisation, including digital communication, events and contact with customers or other third parties.

Definitions and employer duties vary and change. This is a drafting guide that requires local review before use. For UK context, consult the current [Acas sexual harassment guidance](#) and its linked prevention and policy resources. Do not assume an older policy remains current.

Draft the policy in practical language

A starting statement is: “Everyone covered by this policy is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. Harassment and retaliation are not acceptable. We provide routes to raise concerns and will assess them through a fair, appropriate process.” Define the covered population and align the final language with applicable requirements.

Include concrete examples relevant to the workplace, such as unwanted sexual comments, discriminatory messages or intimidating behaviour. Explain that online conduct and work events can fall within scope. Avoid wording that makes the affected person responsible for confronting someone before seeking help.

Provide more than one reporting route

Name an ordinary contact and an alternative if that person or the line manager is involved. Explain how witnesses can raise concerns and how accessible support is arranged. Separate an emergency response from the routine reporting process.

Describe acknowledgement, immediate-risk assessment, information handling and appropriate updates. Do not promise absolute secrecy. Explain that information may need to be shared to respond fairly and meet obligations. State how retaliation concerns are raised and addressed.

Worked example: a work messaging channel

Illustrative scenario: an employee receives unwanted sexual jokes in a work group chat. They use the alternative reporting route because their manager participates in the channel.

The recipient acknowledges the report, checks immediate support needs and arranges an appropriately independent response. Relevant records are preserved through the approved process. The organisation avoids requiring the reporter to debate the issue in the group chat or assuming that participation in the chat indicated consent.

Prevention and response checklist

- Identify work settings and relationships where risks arise.
- Check definitions and prevention duties with a current local reviewer.
- Publish actual reporting contacts and an alternative route.
- Train managers to receive concerns without prejudging them.
- Define confidentiality limits, record access and investigation ownership.
- Explain support, appropriate updates and protection against retaliation.
- Review whether employees can find and use the routes in practice.

The policy should link to approved investigation and disciplinary procedures. Do not prescribe an automatic outcome for every allegation; decisions require a fair assessment of the facts and applicable process.

Maintain the policy as an operating practice

Use scenario-based training and manager practice, not only an acknowledgement form. Review patterns in concerns with access controls that protect the people involved.

Update prevention measures after changes in work arrangements, incidents or legal requirements. A low number of reports does not by itself establish a safe workplace; it may also mean people do not trust or understand the reporting process.

Put the guide into practice

Set aside a working session with the people who own this process and one or two people who experience it. Use a fictional or appropriately authorised case, so the discussion can be specific without sharing unnecessary personal information. The purpose is to leave with a usable decision or document, not just agreement that the topic matters.

Prepare the case

Choose a fictional scenario involving conduct in a work chat or at an event. Ask participants to locate the reporting route and explain what support is available. Include a witness as well as the person affected. The exercise should test the policy's usability without inviting employees to discuss personal incidents publicly.

Write the starting assumptions down before discussing solutions. If the group disagrees on what happened, identify the information needed to resolve that difference rather than building a plan on an untested story.

Work through the decision

Practise receiving a concern. The manager should listen, explain the next step and avoid promising secrecy or a particular outcome. Identify who assesses immediate risks and who arranges a fair response. Check that the policy distinguishes supportive reception from making a finding about what happened.

Ask each participant to explain the proposed decision in their own words. Differences in interpretation often reveal an unclear criterion, a missing responsibility or an instruction that will be difficult to follow.

Test an exception

Introduce a concern involving the normal reporting contact or a senior leader. Use the alternative route and check its independence and accessibility. Also consider a concern about a customer or contractor. The organisation should know who owns the response rather than assuming the issue falls outside its responsibility.

Record what changes in this situation and what remains the same. An exception should lead to a clear next step, with an owner, rather than an informal workaround that nobody can explain later.

Agree the handoff

Give the policy owner a list of contact, training and procedure changes needed before publication. Confirm how employees receive updates and where confidential records are held. Managers need enough practical guidance to respond consistently, including knowing when to involve a trained specialist rather than investigating informally.

Finish by confirming the owner, the next action and the date when the result will be reviewed. Give the person receiving the work enough context to continue without repeating the whole discussion.

Frequently asked questions

Must an employee confront the person involved first?

A policy should provide a route to seek help without making confrontation a prerequisite. People may feel unsafe, face a power imbalance or need advice before deciding what to do. Explain available options through the organisation's approved process and applicable local requirements. Managers should not send someone back to handle a concern alone simply because informal resolution is sometimes possible.

Can harassment happen online or outside the office?

Work-related conduct can occur through messaging, video calls, events and other settings. The exact legal scope depends on jurisdiction and circumstances, so review the policy locally. Use examples relevant to the organisation and explain reporting routes clearly. Do not imply that a concern is automatically irrelevant because it occurred away from a physical workplace or outside a standard meeting.

Does a low number of reports show the policy works?

Not by itself. People may not know the routes, trust the response or feel able to report. Review awareness, accessibility, manager behaviour and the experience of those using the process, with appropriate confidentiality. Look at prevention and follow-through as well as report counts. Avoid creating targets that pressure teams to discourage concerns or make numbers look better.

Review the first cycle

Test whether contact details and alternative routes work, and whether managers can explain confidentiality limits accurately. Review prevention measures when work settings or risks change. Use current local advice for legal updates and retain a controlled record of policy approval, training and process improvements.

Keep a brief record of what was tried, what participants found useful and what needs to change. Compare the result with the original problem rather than judging success only by completion. If the process created extra work without improving clarity, quality or support, simplify it and test again. Share the agreed change with the people who will use it, and name the person responsible for keeping the guidance current.

About New Dynamics

[New Dynamics](#) connects goals, feedback, recognition and reviews around the way organisations work. This guide is published by the New Dynamics Editorial Team as part of our practical library for HR leaders, managers and People teams.

Use the examples and worksheets to structure your own discussions and adapt them to your organisation. Illustrative scenarios are not customer case studies. Policy and employment guidance needs appropriate local review before adoption.

For questions about this guide, corrections or a conversation about your performance management process, email contact@new-dynamics.com. Explore the complete [guide library](#) for related resources.

Your working worksheet

Use the prompts from this guide to prepare one real conversation or decision. Keep personal or sensitive information in your organisation's approved records. This page is for your own working notes.

Identify work settings and relationships where risks arise.

Check definitions and prevention duties with a current local reviewer.

Publish actual reporting contacts and an alternative route.

Train managers to receive concerns without prejudging them.

Define confidentiality limits, record access and investigation ownership.

Explain support, appropriate updates and protection against retaliation.

Review whether employees can find and use the routes in practice.

Discuss your next step with New Dynamics: contact@new-dynamics.com