

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

Sexual harassment

Government set to introduce mandatory duty on employers to protect staff by introducing explicit protections from third-party harassment



UNISON welcomes new law to prevent sexual harassment at work

UNISON has welcomed the government's recent announcement to introduce a mandatory duty on employers to protect staff from sexual harassment by introducing explicit protections from third-party harassment - for example, from clients and contractors.

This is something that UNISON has been calling for as part of the #ThisIsNotWorking alliance - a TUC-led coalition of unions, women's rights bodies and business organisations.

UNISON national women's officer Josie Irwin has warned that the union will need to keep a close eye on progress and ensure the government honours this intention.

"A workplace culture that tolerates sexual harassment also allows violence to fester. Too many workers have had to put up with appalling behaviour for too long because they felt nothing would be done if they reported it. The government must now act swiftly to turn words into action, change the law and enforce it."

The proposals include plans to extend the time limit for bringing cases to an employment tribunal

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from three to six months.

Sexual harassment is rife in workplaces and can have a devastating impact on survivors, often leading to ill-health and work-related stress, affecting both work performance and a survivors' personal life. It can leave people powerless, ashamed, hopeless and scared.

What to do if you are being sexually harassed at work

- Speak to a trusted friend or family member.
- Speak to your UNISON rep.
- Keep a record of what has happened to you (including time, date, location and any witnesses or evidence such as copies of letters, text messages, emails, etc, as well as details of any medical help sought).
- If you feel sufficiently safe, tell the harasser to stop. You could ask them in writing. Your UNISON rep should be able to support you. Keep a record of any steps you have taken to stop the sexual harassment and of any response from the harasser.
- Speak to your line manager or, if they are the harasser, to a more senior manager or to the HR department.
- If the problem is not resolved, make a formal complaint using your workplace grievance procedure or the reporting procedure within your workplace anti-harassment policy (if there is one). Your UNISON rep should be able to support you. Make sure you contact us before submitting a grievance.