



## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

As an equal opportunities employer, Survivors' Network aims to provide a safe and supportive working environment for all of our colleagues, free from harassment.

Sexual harassment breaches Survivors' Network policy as outlined below, and goes against the very core of the mission and values of our organisation. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Dignity At Work policy and our Disciplinary and Grievance policy. Sexual harassment is classified as a serious offence which may result in disciplinary action. In addition, it should be noted that harassment might well constitute a criminal act for which individuals may face prosecution through the Courts.

Survivors' Network recognises that harassment is potentially damaging to the health and well-being of employees and volunteers (henceforth referred to as 'staff'). In addition to the personal costs to our staff, there are other costs that the organisation may bear in terms of low productivity, dissatisfied staff, poor quality of service and high staff turnover. Accusations of sexual harassment can be distressing for the person accused too. Whilst a fair and thorough investigation will be carried out, we will also offer support and security to everyone involved in the investigation, regardless of their involvement.

This policy applies to all staff within Survivors' Network. Everyone carries personal responsibility for their own behaviour in relation to this policy and is responsible for ensuring that their conduct is in line with the standards set out in this policy. All staff will be informed of Survivors' Network policy with regards to sexual harassment at induction and informed of the procedures in place to deal with it.

### **Definition**

Sexual harassment can be defined as uninvited, unreciprocated and unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature which is offensive to the person involved and causes that person to feel threatened, humiliated or embarrassed. While it predominantly affects women, it can happen to people of any gender, can be carried out by people of any gender, and should always be taken seriously.

For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment includes but is not limited to:

- Inappropriate physical contact, from invading someone's personal space and unnecessary touching, through to sexual assault and rape (although rape is defined as a separate criminal offence)
- Unwanted sexual comments (including comments about someone's body or personal

life)

- Unwelcome sexual invitations, innuendos, and offensive gestures including wolf-whistling, cat-calling or offensive sexual noises
- Groping, pinching or smacking someone's body
- Tugging, pulling or lifting up someone's clothing
- Exposure of sexual organs
- Stalking
- Suggestions that sexual favours may further someone's career, or that refusing them may damage it – including demands for sexual favours and worsening of behaviour if a sexual advance is rejected
- Displaying offensive material, such as pornographic pictures, including circulating such material in emails.

Sexual harassment can come from anyone, including but not limited to:

- someone on the same team
- a supervisor or manager
- another member of staff
- someone else that a staff member comes into contact with while working

Allegations may be about non-recent incidents. These will be taken seriously as we recognise that coming forward about these experiences can take time and support.

### **Behaviour outside work and online**

If unwanted or offensive behaviour happens outside of the workplace but is still related to Survivors' Network, for example at a work-related social event or training course, this can still be reported and it will be dealt with in line with this policy.

If a staff member posts potentially offensive or inappropriate comments or images about or directed at colleagues or service users on social media, we will take this very seriously and it will be dealt with in line with this policy, and in line with our disciplinary and grievance policy.

### **The Equality Act**

The Equality Act 2010 makes employers potentially liable for the harassment of their staff, including by people they don't employ. In recognition of this legal obligation, as well as Survivors' Network's core mission and values, Survivors' Network is totally committed to the elimination of bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination and adopts a zero tolerance attitude to all forms of harassment.

### **Responsibility**

Every manager has an obligation to prevent harassment and to take immediate and sensitive action once it has been identified, whether or not a formal complaint has been made.

All staff within Survivors' Network have a responsibility to make our workplace a safe space. To that end, every staff member has a personal responsibility not to harass or bully

other members of staff.

### **Making a complaint of sexual harassment**

Anyone who feels that they have been sexually harassed, or who feels they have seen sexual harassment take place, can make a complaint of sexual harassment to their manager.

Before speaking to someone, it is often useful to make notes about the incident involved, especially if recalling the incident is particularly upsetting. It is also advisable to keep a record of any incidents detailing when, where, what occurred, and witnesses (if any), as a formal complaint must be made in writing.

Depending on the wishes of the complainant, it is acceptable to raise the issue informally with their manager or to take the issue directly to a formal complaint. If they do not feel able or safe to speak with their manager about this issue, the complaint should be made to a member of the Management Committee.

### **Handling a complaint of sexual harassment**

All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken very seriously and handled fairly and sensitively.

Experiencing sexual harassment is often extremely emotional and distressing. This means we will aim to make reporting as stress-free as possible, including making sure there is plenty of time to discuss the matter and offering a private space to meet.

We understand that the complainant may want to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative at a meeting involving allegations of sexual harassment. This can be arranged. The complainant may wish to be accompanied by a friend or family member, this is permissible at the discretion of the employer.

If a complaint is reported to police, or criminal court proceedings are being pursued, internal investigations will still take place as an employment matter, in line with our disciplinary and grievance procedure.

### **Procedure**

Where an issue of sexual harassment or potential sexual harassment is raised, the Director is to initiate an investigation of the circumstances and agree an action plan with all concerned. The investigation is to be independent of the protagonists and, where necessary, external resources will be utilised. The Director is to ensure that anyone conducting an investigation has received appropriate training, information and instruction to allow both a thorough and impartial examination of the facts as they present.

### **Immediate Action**

Where possible, on receipt of a complaint of sexual harassment, the complainant and the alleged harasser should be separated. The alleged harasser may be suspended on pay/time out until the issue is fully resolved. Both parties will have the right to be supported by a colleague.

## **Investigation**

The investigation should be initiated as soon as possible, and a disciplinary interview should be undertaken in accordance with the disciplinary and grievance procedure. This period may be extended where it is agreed that this would be in the best interests of the investigation. All parties must be informed of such a decision and given information, without prejudicing the investigation, supporting a delay.

## **Findings**

The findings of the investigation are to be detailed in a written report which will be distributed to all parties concerned and to the Management Committee. Actions necessary will then be formulated into an action plan and the plan implemented forthwith.

The Director is to ensure the investigation proceeds as quickly as is practicable and that all parties are regularly updated with regard to its progress. On completion of the investigation a report will be made to Management Committee members and the action plan is to be implemented drawing on available resources as necessary.

## **Discipline**

The investigation will not necessarily result in disciplinary action where alternative solutions are appropriate such as mediation or the modification of behaviour, however, the sanctions set out in company disciplinary procedures may be used if appropriate.

## **Support**

Where appropriate internal/external counselling will be available to victims of sexual harassment to ensure, where possible, a complete recovery. Support will also be offered to complainants if they wish to pursue the issue within the criminal justice system. Relevant support services are also listed below.

Samaritans: A charity who can provide emotional support for anyone struggling to cope and who needs someone to listen. They can be found at: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Police: Call 999 if someone is in immediate danger or if the crime is in progress. Otherwise contacting the police is at the discretion of the complainant.

## **Confidentiality**

The highest degree of confidentiality is to be maintained at all times during the investigation into sexual harassment. Survivors' Network gives an assurance that there will be no victimisation against anyone making a complaint under this policy or against anyone who assists or supports a colleague in making a complaint.

Under no circumstances is the fact that a complaint of harassment has been made to be entered onto an individual's record. Raising a complaint is to have no effect on the individual's status or future within the organisation.

## **Communication**

All staff will be informed of the Sexual Harassment Policy. They will be reassured regarding:

- fear that others will consider the behaviour trivial and not take complaints of harassment seriously
- fear that no action will be taken against a person found guilty of harassment
- fear of retaliation or victimisation in registering a complaint either informally or formally

The Sexual Harassment Policy will be part of staff induction. Survivors' Network welcomes staff suggestions in delivering a workplace free from harassment. The Director will consult with staff wherever practicable to further develop procedures to deal with harassment.

It is envisaged that this policy will develop over time to account for such development and for changes in working conditions, legal requirements and other developments.

## **Training**

Training will be provided for those employees who have a specific responsibility for implementing this policy or who may be involved in dealing with complaints which arise.