

Dated: 13/05/2024

POLICY TITLE: Sexual Harassment

OWNING DIRECTORATE: Corporate & Strategic Services

AUTHOR: Head of People and Organisational Development

CONTACT DETAILS: I01

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT: Complete

AUTHORISED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (APP) NATIONAL GUIDANCE: No

AIM OF POLICY: The aim of this policy is to:

- Advise what constitutes sexual harassment.
- Make clear the professional behaviour expected of all officers, staff, police support volunteers (PSVs), contractors, workers and prospective job applicants.
- Empower those who wish to raise a complaint by setting out a clear process.
- To support those who are affected by sexual harassment.
- Make clear the responsibility on the force, and managers, to remove sexual harassment from the workplace.
- Make clear the expectation of everyone to be an upstander, challenging sexual harassment if observed or otherwise believed to be happening in the workplace.
- To ensure individuals know the support available in Northumbria Police.

BENEFIT OF POLICY: Northumbria Police will be an inclusive and welcoming working environment for all officers, staff, and PSVs, free of sexual harassment and victimisation.

REASON FOR POLICY: To ensure a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in the workplace.

DESCRIPTION OF POLICY:

Everyone has the right to a working environment free of harassment from others within the service and members of the public. Northumbria Police will proactively support such a working environment.

Sexual harassment occurs when a person engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of:

- Violating someone's dignity, whether intended or not.
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, whether intended or not.

Individuals are responsible for:

- Being aware of how their behaviour may affect others.
- Taking a stand if inappropriate jokes, comments or gestures are being made.
- Making it clear to others when their behaviour is unacceptable.
- Intervening to stop sexual harassment and discreditable conduct and giving support to anyone who may have been harassed.
- Reporting harassment to a manager, the Professional Standards Department, or via any of the reporting lines detailed below and co-operating as required in investigations.
- If a complaint of harassment is made, ensuring no bias or victimisation of the complainant or alleged harasser.

Managers have a responsibility to:

- Implement the zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment.
- Set a good example by their own behaviour.
- Ensure that there is a proactive and supportive working environment.
- Make sure that staff know the standard of behaviour that is expected of them.
- Intervene to stop bullying or harassment.
- Report promptly to Professional Standards Department any complaint of harassment, or any incident of harassment witnessed by or reported to them and ensure that appropriate steps are taken.

Northumbria Police will be liable for sexual harassment committed by its officers, staff or PSVs during their employment/volunteering unless they can show they took all reasonable steps to prevent the harassment. 'In the course of employment' includes acts committed in any other place where work is conducted such as offsite, at a training course, conference or external meeting, as well as other circumstances in which the officer/staff member is not actually working but relate to work, such as at a leaving party or other social event.

Northumbria Police will ensure reasonable action is taken to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and will ensure there is support available for anyone who feels they have had their dignity violated or where an individual(s) has created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, whether intended or not.

Reasonable action includes:

- Setting standards and a culture so all are made aware that such behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Providing opportunities for teams to discuss sexual harassment and the importance of tackling unlawful and discriminatory practices.
- Ensuring there is a clear reporting process in place.

- Ensuring accusations are fully investigated and appropriate action taken.
- Ensuring support is available to individuals affected by sexual harassment.

Northumbria Police will provide training, development, information and guidance to support the effective application and understanding of this policy and associated underpinning processes and procedures.

Individuals are encouraged to come forward if they believe they have been sexually harassed. Northumbria Police has robust procedures in place designed to promptly take action.

Wherever possible, Northumbria Police will ensure the individual and alleged harasser are not required to work together whilst any complaint is under investigation.

An individual who sexually harasses someone at work will be held responsible for their actions and if a member of Northumbria Police faces an investigation into their conduct at work this could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. In addition, they could be held personally liable to pay compensation in legal claims.

SOURCE DOCUMENT: NPCC Sexual Harassment Plan

GROUPS AFFECTED: All officers and staff.

ACCESS AND DISCLOSURE RESTRICTIONS: None
