



Sexual Harassment Policy

Date of Adoption	16 th July 2025. Minute 25/07(126d) Full Council
Reviewed	Annually – Staffing Committee



Sexual Harassment Policy

Newton Abbot Town Council

1. Introduction

Newton Abbot Town Council (the Council) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive working environment, free from all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment. This policy outlines the Council's approach to preventing and addressing sexual harassment in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, as amended by the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023.

The Council recognises its positive legal duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and will ensure that all workers, councillors, volunteers, and service users are protected accordingly.

2. Legislative Drivers

A new duty on employers has been imposed under the Workers Protection (amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. This act introduces a new positive obligation on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment where the unwanted conduct is of a sexual nature. This came into force from October 2024. If sexual harassment of any kind is carried out by a member of staff, the employer could be liable where no action is taken to stop it.

This policy is based on guidance provided by the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and is compliant with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. Newton Abbot Town Council is committed to upholding the highest standards of workplace safety and respect.

3. Statement of Commitment

- Sexual harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- Sexual harassment is unlawful and contravenes the Council's values and obligations.
- All allegations of sexual harassment will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and dealt with appropriately.
- Workers must not be victimised for reporting sexual harassment or participating in investigations.

4. Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of:

- Violating a person's dignity; or
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for them.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Unwelcome sexual advances or physical contact
- Inappropriate or suggestive comments, jokes or gestures
- Displaying or circulating sexually explicit materials
- Inappropriate or intrusive questions about a person's private life
- Online or digital harassment of a sexual nature

5. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Council employees
- Councillors and co-opted members
- Volunteers, agency workers and apprentices
- Contractors, suppliers, residents, and service users engaging with the Council

It applies both within the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the office, such as business trips, events, or social functions.

6. Responsibilities

The Council, as the employer, is responsible for:

- Taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.
- Promoting a culture of respect and dignity at work.
- Providing training to ensure understanding of sexual harassment and the expected standards of behaviour.
- Responding swiftly and appropriately to any complaints or concerns raised.

Managers and supervisors are expected to:

- Act promptly on any reports or observations of sexual harassment.
- Maintain confidentiality where possible.
- Support workers during the complaint process.

All workers are expected to:

- Treat others with respect and dignity.
- Report any incidents or concerns, whether experienced or witnessed.

7. Third-Party Harassment

The Council acknowledges its duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties such as customers, residents, or contractors.

Steps include:

- Encouraging workers to report incidents.
- Investigating and addressing any complaints.
- Taking appropriate action, which may include warnings to offenders, restricting access, or involving law enforcement if necessary.

8. Reporting and Complaints Procedure

Workers who experience or witness sexual harassment are encouraged to report the matter promptly. Reports can be made:

- Informally to your line manager or the Town Clerk; or
- Formally through the Council's Grievance Procedure.

Confidentiality will be maintained where possible. Retaliation or victimisation for making or supporting a complaint is prohibited and will be subject to disciplinary action. If a complaint concerns potential criminal behaviour, support will be provided for reporting to the police if the complainant wishes to do so.

9. Investigation Process

- All complaints will be investigated without undue delay.
- Both the complainant and alleged harasser will have the opportunity to present their accounts.
- Support measures, such as temporary reassignments, may be offered during the investigation.
- Appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, will be taken where allegations are upheld.

10. Training and Communication

The Council will provide mandatory training on recognising, preventing, and addressing sexual harassment for all employees, managers, and councillors.

Information on this policy and reporting procedures is available to all workers and will be included as part of the induction process.

11. Monitoring and Review

The Council will:

- Monitor reports and trends relating to sexual harassment.
- Conduct staff surveys and hold one-to-one meetings or exit interviews to identify any concerns.
- Review the effectiveness of this policy and associated training regularly or following any relevant incidents or legislative changes.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT REPORTING PROCESS

Incident or concern arises?



Report to manager or
Town Clerk



**INVESTIGATION
WITHOUT UNDUE DELAY**



Maintain confidentiality
Offer support to parties



Appropriate action taken
Disciplinary action if necessary

Newton Abbot Town Council Sexual Harassment - Manager Quick Reference Guide

Your Key Responsibilities

Promote a culture of dignity and respect - Act immediately on any concern or incident - Maintain confidentiality - Support complainants and witnesses - Follow proper investigation procedures - Keep accurate, confidential records - Complete all required training

What to Do if a Concern is Raised

1. Listen: Stay calm and listen carefully. Take all concerns seriously.
2. Reassure: Thank the individual. Confirm the matter will be treated sensitively.
3. Record: Note key details: who, what, when, where. Use factual, neutral language.
4. Explain: Advise on options: informal resolution or formal complaint.
5. Report: Inform the Town Clerk promptly. Seek advice if needed.

Investigation Reminders

- Act promptly and without undue delay.
- Offer protection measures where needed (e.g., alternative working arrangements).
- Treat both parties fairly and impartially.
- Communicate regularly with all involved.
- Conclude promptly and advise on appeal rights.

Dealing with Third-Party Harassment

- Treat complaints against residents, customers, or suppliers equally seriously.
- Take action (e.g., warnings, banning access, police reporting).
- Support affected staff.

Golden Rules

- Do not dismiss any complaint.
- Maintain confidentiality - only inform those who need to know.
- Act in line with policy - protect the Council and your team.
- Lead by example - set the standard for workplace behaviour.
- If in doubt, ask for advice.