ics Accounting

Sexual Harassment



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Training Outcomes

- What sexual harassment is, how it may occur and that it will not be tolerated
- Expected levels of behaviour
- How to report any incidents of having been sexually harassed or having witnessed it
- How acts of harassment will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure, which can potentially result in dismissal.

Under the Employment Rights Act (2025), employers are expected to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, including harassment by third parties such as customers, clients, contractors, and service users.

The findings below, taken from the UK Government Equalities Office Sexual Harassment Survey (2020), provide some insight into the scale of the issue.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the UK population have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in their lifetime. Two-in-five (43%) of the UK population have experienced at least one sexual harassment behaviour in the last 12 months.

Two-in-five (43%) of the UK population have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in the last 12 months, with nearly three quarters (72%) having experienced it over their lifetime.

The top three reported sexual harassment behaviours experienced were: sexual jokes, staring or looks, and sexual comments. These were most common over both individuals' lifetimes and within the last 12 months

What is Sexual Harassment ?

Under the Equality Act 2010, sexual harassment is legally 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.

Sexual harassment takes many forms, but whatever form it takes it is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 (EqA) as amended.

ICS Umbrella has a zero-tolerance policy toward any form of sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual Harassment in any form is unacceptable behaviour and will not be permitted or condoned and will be viewed as gross misconduct.



Legal definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a form of discrimination. It is any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature if the purpose or effect violates the victim's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

A victim of sexual harassment is protected under the law if the sexual harassment took place outside of the workplace but within the course of employment.

Victims of sexual harassment could claim harassment under the law if they are treated less favourably because they rejected or submitted to sexual conduct.

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or nonverbal and extends to third parties employed outside the business.

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Examples of Sexual Harassment

- Sexual comments, jokes or gestures.
- Displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content, for example, images generated by artificial intelligence (AI).
- Making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance.
- Making sexual comments someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment.
- Touching someone against their will, for example, hugging them.
- What some people might consider as joking, 'banter' or part of their workplace culture can still be sexual harassment.



Who can this affect?

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone men, women and people of any sexual orientation.

It can be carried out by anyone of the same sex, another sex or anyone of any sexual orientation

- You could experience sexual harassment from anyone you come into contact with during your assignment
- It can be someone you work with
- It can be a manager, supervisor or someone else in a position of authority
- It can also occur from third parties – for example customers, clients and members of the public

Sexual harassment can be visual or non verbal and it can be a one-off incident. It doesn't matter that no one else in the office was offended by the pictures or that it was intended as a joke

Everyone has the right to work in a safe and respectful environment.

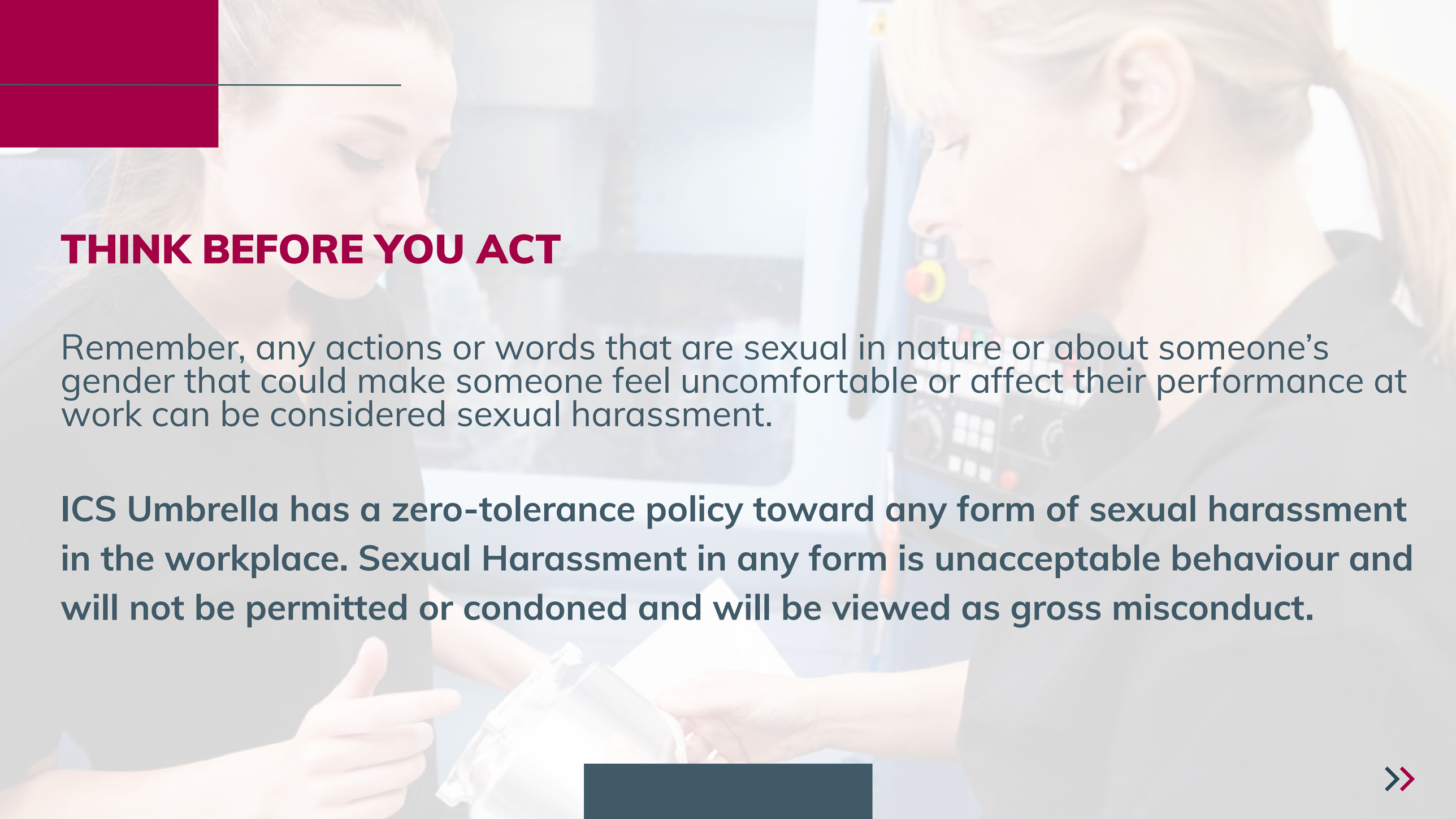
As employees, what can we ask ourselves to prevent sexual harassment or any kind of harassment?

Could this behaviour offend the person or other people at work?

Could someone misinterpret the meaning? Would they see it as harassment?

Would you be embarrassed if your comment or behaviour was posted on social media or in the newspaper for the public to read?

How would you feel if you were in the other person's position?



THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

Remember, any actions or words that are sexual in nature or about someone's gender that could make someone feel uncomfortable or affect their performance at work can be considered sexual harassment.

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What If I See It Happening?

If you witness sexual harassment:

Don't join in.

You can:

- Check in with the person afterwards.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour if it is safe to do so, do not put yourself at risk or harm.
- Report what you witnessed to a manager or appropriate contact.
- Offer to support the person making a complaint.

Being a bystander doesn't mean you have to stay silent.



What If Someone Reports It to Me?

If someone tells you they have experienced sexual harassment:

- Listen.
- Take them seriously.
- Don't blame or question them about why they didn't report it sooner.
- Don't promise to keep it completely secret.
- Explain who you need to speak to under the appropriate procedures.
- Report it through the appropriate channel, for example people@icsuk.com / via your Agency or Client.

Your job is to listen and help — not investigate it yourself.

What Should I Do If It Happens to Me?

If it feels safe to do so:

- Tell the person their behaviour is unwanted and ask them to stop.
- Make a note of what happened, including dates, times and witnesses.
- Keep relevant messages, emails or other evidence.
- Speak to your supervisor, site manager or HR/safeguarding contact.
- You can confidentially email ICS via people@icsuk.com
- If taking action could cause harm or put you at risk, seek help from your site manager or HR/safeguarding contact.

You do not have to confront someone if you don't feel safe doing so.



Where can I report it?

First point of contact:

- Your site manager or supervisor
- Your agency contact
- ICS’ confidential reporting/whistleblowing procedure: people@icsuk.com

If the behaviour involves threats, violence, stalking or other criminal behaviour, consider contacting the police.

- Emergency: 999
- Police non-emergency: 101
- If you're unsure what to do, speak to someone you trust or ask your employer for advice.

Remember: STOP • SPEAK • REPORT

STOP
Don't join in with inappropriate behaviour – think before you act.

SPEAK
If it's safe, challenge it or support someone who is experiencing it, or speak to the relevant people on site for guidance or advice.

REPORT
Tell the appropriate person if something happens.

A respectful workplace is everyone's responsibility.