



Women's Equality Party Sexual Violence Policy

Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual act or activity. There are many different kinds of sexual violence, including but not restricted to: rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape within marriage / relationships, forced marriage, so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and ritual abuse.

The Women's Equality Party is determined to provide a safe environment for its members, supporters, volunteers and employees, free from discrimination on any grounds and from harassment including sexual harassment. We operate a zero tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment. We will treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate any allegations.

If you believe you have experienced sexual harassment or violence, the following services may also be of support:

- [Rape Crisis](#): offers help for anyone who has experienced sexual violence. They have a free phone number (0808 802 9999) that you can call between 12-2.30pm and 7-9.30pm every day of the year. They also have Rape Crisis Centres across the UK where you can access a range of support services.
- [Police](#): has specialist teams that are trained to deal with rape and sexual assault. The party will not report this to the police unless you want us to.
- If you are thinking about reporting this to the police or have decided that you want to, then you can also access an [Independent Sexual Violence Advisor](#) whose role is to provide practical and emotional support and information to you. These can be accessed through Rape Crisis or through the party.
- [Sexual assault referral centres](#): can offer you medical support and advice

We will always endeavour to provide a safe, respectful and confidential approach to the investigation of allegations. We will always prioritise the interest and wellbeing of the complainant. No one will ever be victimised for making a complaint.

Should you experience any behaviour that you feel amounts to sexual harassment either towards yourself or another member, volunteer or employee we strongly encourage you to report it to us as soon as you can.

The party will not report this to the police unless you want us to. There are rare and exceptional circumstances where we might be obliged to share information you give us, such as if a child is in immediate danger, but she will try and discuss this with you if this should occur.

We take sexual harassment very seriously. Any person found to have sexually harassed another will, subject to the Party's complaint procedure, be ejected from the Party membership. If the allegation is against a member of our staff, they will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

Defining Sexual Harassment

Harassment is defined by law in the Equality Act 2010 as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'. In the case of sexual harassment, the relevant protected characteristic is 'sex'.

Behaviour that constitutes sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical violence, including sexual assault, and the threat of such
- Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, this may be either physical or verbal
- Inappropriate or suggestive remarks or verbal sexual advances,
- Indecent comments, jokes or innuendos relating to a person's looks or private life
- Unwanted physical contact such as hugging, kissing or inappropriate touching
- Requests for sexual favours
- The display or circulation of pornographic or indecent images
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. We recognise that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

The Women's Equality Party recognises that sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relationships and often occurs within unequal relationships.

Complaints procedure

We understand that reporting sexual harassment can be very upsetting and intimidating so we aim to make the process as clear and straightforward as possible. If a complainant chooses to contact us, it will be treated as a formal complaint only if they make it clear that this is the route they would like to take. We will make sure that they have access to an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA.) We are happy to offer informal advice about the possible action and outcomes open to them and will not force them to take any action they do not feel comfortable with.

If a complainant wishes to deal with the matter informally, then we will:

- give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint
- ensure that the alleged harasser understands the complaints mechanism
- facilitate discussion between both parties - in which the complainant is protected at all times and is never face to face with the alleged harasser - to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant, or refer the matter to an independent mediator to resolve the matter
- ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens
- follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behaviour has stopped
- ensure that the above is done speedily and within 10 working days of the complaint being made
- If the complainant wishes to deal with the matter formally then the procedure to be followed will depend upon whether the complaint is directed towards another member, supporter or volunteer or whether the complaint regards an employee of the Party.

In respect of complaints against employees these will be dealt with in accordance with the Party's disciplinary procedures as set out in the Employee Handbook. Complaints against another member or volunteer will be investigated in accordance with the Party's complaints procedure, a copy of which can be found here: womensequality.org.uk/complaints.

The starting point of any formal procedure is a written statement from the complainant setting out the nature of the complaint. Once the party has this statement and the statements of any witnesses the complainant is able to provide, the alleged harasser will be informed of the details of the complaint made against them. The applicable complaint or disciplinary procedure will then commence.



At no point in the process will the complainant be required to confront the alleged harasser face to face. All details of the complaint will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

If you want to talk to someone in the Party about this policy or to make a complaint please call 020 7407 9230. This number can be answered by a range of people and you will need to state that you wish to discuss a complaint. Alternatively you can email complaints@womensquality.org.uk