

*Usdaw*

Campaigning  
For Equality

# Discrimination Sexual 'Banter' at Work ... It's not OK



An advice guide  
for Usdaw reps



Usdaw members who have faced sexual harassment say it's often hard to deal with, especially when other colleagues laugh at so called jokes and join in with the banter ...

In the heat of the moment fear, anger, shame, embarrassment or panic can make it very difficult to respond – knowing other people are on your side really helps.



**Sexist jokes and remarks matter because they can create an environment where workers feel unable to speak up about what's happening to them.**

If it's left up to one person to challenge the jokes and banter they just end up feeling more isolated and alone.

You could use the statements below to point out to people that what they are saying and doing may be upsetting and embarrassing to others.

- I'm not happy with what you said.
- I don't agree.
- I don't think that's funny.
- A lot of people would find that offensive.
- How do you think that comment makes the women here feel?

# Supporting a member experiencing sexual harassment

Given the nature of the issue it is important that union reps should:

- Treat all cases of sexual harassment seriously and support the members involved.
- Take up cases as quickly as possible.
- Establish whether other workers have experienced similar problems.
- Advise the worker complaining of sexual harassment about what to do and about the grievance procedure.
- Before invoking a formal procedure, you may want to advise the complainant to ask the harasser to stop. If she wishes you, as her rep, to do so on her behalf, you can do this.

However, the Code of Practice to the Equality Act makes it clear that express objection doesn't have to be made to the conduct for it to be deemed unwanted. A serious 'one-off' incident can amount to harassment.


- Report the incident(s) to management.
- Keep (a) a record of each occurrence of the offending conduct (b) copies of any letters sent to the alleged harasser about his conduct and (c) notes of any meetings about the incident(s).



## Seven out of 10 women members have experienced sexual harassment at some point in their working lives.

- Advise the member that if the matter is not resolved through the procedures, it may be possible to take the matter to an Employment Tribunal. Tribunal claims must be lodged within strict time limits – normally three months less one day from the date of dismissal or cause of complaint ie the date the harassment occurred. Remember to always follow company grievance and appeal procedures.
- Seek the support, with the member's agreement, of other workers in order to reduce the risks of isolation and victimisation.

- Make provision for the harassed member to discuss the matter with a woman union rep. Arrangements can be made in each division of the Union for sexual harassment matters to be discussed in strict confidence with a woman union official if the member wishes this.

Three diverse women of different ages and ethnicities are smiling and holding a large white sign. They are standing in front of a background of dark, horizontal corrugated metal. The sign contains text about challenging sexist jokes and sexual harassment in the workplace.

**Will YOU help challenge sexist 'jokes'  
and 'banter' in your workplace?**

**Sexual Harassment...  
'Call It Out'**

# Usdaw contacts

To find out more about the work of the Divisional Equalities Forums and Usdaw's equality work or about joining Usdaw contact:

## South Wales and Western Division

Cardiff Office  
Tel: 029 2073 1131  
email: cardiff@usdaw.org.uk

## Eastern Division

Waltham Cross Office  
Tel: 01992 709280  
email: walthamx@usdaw.org.uk

## Midlands Division

Redditch Office  
Tel: 01527 406290  
email: redditch@usdaw.org.uk

## North Eastern Division

Leeds Office  
Tel: 0113 232 1320  
email: leeds@usdaw.org.uk

## Scottish Division

Glasgow Office  
Tel: 0141 427 6561  
email: glasgow@usdaw.org.uk

## Southern Division

Morden Office  
Tel: 020 8687 5950  
email: morden@usdaw.org.uk

## North West Division

Warrington Office  
Tel: 01925 578050  
email: warrington@usdaw.org.uk

## Equalities Section

Usdaw  
188 Wilmslow Road  
Manchester M14 6LJ  
Tel: 0161 224 2804  
email: equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk



**Improving workers' lives -  
Winning for members**

[www.usdaw.org.uk/equalities](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/equalities)

*Usdaw*

**Campaigning  
For Equality**