



LEEK TOWN COUNCIL

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Approved 16th September 2025

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Leek Town Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment including a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Leek Town Councils policy defines procedures to prevent, manage and respond to work-related sexual harassment.

1.2 Members of staff and Councillors should not be subjected to sexual harassment, which is defined as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. The Equality Act 2010 protects the following people against sexual harassment at work:

- Employees
- Agency worker or contractors
- Job applicants
- Councillors
- People hired to work for the council.

To constitute sexual harassment, the behaviour must be unwanted and have:

- Violated someone's dignity, whether it was intended or not, or
- Created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, whether it was intended or not.

The key element to sexual harassment is that it is unwelcome. Examples of sexual harassment include:

- Unwelcome advances – physical, written or verbal
- Sexual comments, jokes, or innuendos.

- Sharing inappropriate information, sexual images, etc.
- Making comments about a person's gender identity.
- Coercion.

Third party sexual harassment occurs when a person is harassed by someone who does not work for the Council, but with whom they come into contact during work-based activity, eg visitor, service user.

2. THE LAW ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from harassment in three circumstances

- Sexual harassment
- harassment related to 'protected characteristics' eg sexuality
- Where a person is treated less favourably where they submit to or reject unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or that is related to gender reassignment or sex.

From October 2024 new legislation (s40A Equality Act 2010) requires employers to take positive preventative steps (preventative duty), in relation to employees including their parties.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO THIS POLICY

- 3.1 The Town Clerk has the responsibility to implement this policy and to make sure staff are aware of it and understand it. The Town Clerk should also:
- 3.2 Treat any reports of work based sexual harassment seriously and respond to them promptly.
- 3.3 Record details of the incident where appropriate and give all employees involved in the incident full support during the whole process.
- 3.4 Respond to and, where possible, resolve incidents, ideally before they escalate, treating reports with proper confidentiality.
- 3.5 Monitor incidences of sexual harassment and initiate proper action if more measures are needed. Review and suggest amendments to this policy and the risk assessment, as necessary.
- 3.6 Direct individuals involved, to proper support and lend support to their colleagues, including those that might have witnessed the incident. If

victims are particularly affected by the event, provide support where possible, such as time off work or changes to their tasks.

- 3.7 Work with the police if an investigation is needed and offer any assistance needed to help in their enquiries.
- 3.8 Act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. Where the incident involves the Town Clerk, this should be reported to the Chair of the Human Resources Committee who shall carry out the responsibilities normally assigned to the Town Clerk.

4. Staff and Councillors should set a positive example by reporting all alleged incidents of sexual harassment and not tolerating such behaviour from members of the public.

5. To prevent work-related sexual harassment staff and Councillors should:

- Work in a way that is compliant with the Town Council's policy.
- Recognise the potential for sexual harassment and discuss concerns early with colleagues.
- Do not accept sexual harassment. Report any instances, detailing when it happened, who was involved and any other relevant circumstances.
- Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or witnesses.
- Act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of sexual harassment.
- Consider the risk assessment indications including the work environment and job specifications.

6. REPORTING AND RECORDING

Staff and Councillors have a responsibility to report incidents of sexual harassment to the Town Clerk or, if appropriate, the Chair of the Human Resources Committee. All incidents must be recorded by the Town Clerk, specifying when the incident occurred, and who was involved, with descriptions of the alleged perpetrator and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident.

If the Town Clerk identifies an increase in reports, or if several reports within a brief period relate to the same alleged perpetrator, then this should be brought to the attention of the Human Resources Committee for further investigation.

7. OTHER RELATED HR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Dignity at work
- Grievance procedure
- Whistleblowing
- Health and Safety at Work
- Code of Conduct of Members