Harassment in the Workplace – Policy Briefing (October 2026)

Introduction

From October 2026 employers have increased responsibilities to prevent harassment (including sexual harassment) from occurring both in the workplace and by any third parties such as customers, suppliers, contractors, visitors etc.

What is Harassment (including sexual harassment)

- "Harassment" is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

- Harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to another protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

- It encompasses a range of unwelcome behaviours, including unwanted advances, inappropriate remarks, and physical assault and can lead to significant psychological, emotional, and professional consequences the impact of which can be profound on a person's life.

Laws on sexual harassment in the workplace

- The Employment Rights Act 2025 has expanded the original protections and now covers employees in customer facing roles and those who deal with other external parties, so that the employer can now be held liable for sexual harassment carried out by third parties.

Company Policy

- The policy of Advance Tapes is zero tolerance of any behaviour which causes another to feel alarmed or in some sort of distress. Our stance is that harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of the usual categories.

- Our policy is available for all staff to read, understand and comply with and will be contained within our Employee Handbook which will be re-issued in the coming weeks.

Some Specific Examples (not an exhaustive list)

- Verbal abuse, shop floor/office "banter", offensive comments, jokes, taunts or pranks, whether or not related to a protected characteristic;
- Unwanted physical conduct, intimidation or "horseplay" (such as touching, pinching, grabbing, hitting, pushing, or jostling);

- Lewd or suggestive comments or gestures, including offensive comments or gestures about appearance or dress, innuendo, leering and whistling;
- Sending or displaying material by any means that is pornographic, inflammatory, abusive, or that some people might find offensive (including “pin-ups”, graffiti, emails, text messages, video clips and/or images sent electronically or posted online);
- Gossip and speculation about someone's sexual orientation or transgender status, including spreading malicious rumours;
- Derogatory comments about pregnancy, maternity leave or IVF treatment;
- Continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;
- Excluding or making derogatory comments about someone because of a perceived protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.

A single incident can amount to harassment. It is the impact of the conduct and not the intent of the action that determines whether harassment has taken place.

What you should do if you are being harassed

- Try and resolve the situation informally but if this doesn’t work, speak with your line manager or a third party who you trust to support you. This will then be discussed with you before deciding how to progress.

- If informal processes fail, then a more formal approach may be needed.

All staff have the right to work in an environment which is free from bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) and that we will not tolerate any instances of this behaviour which is properly reported to us.