

Linda Shearing

Training Document: Anti-Harassment Awareness and Prevention

Training Objective:

To educate all staff at Viamed Ltd, Vandagraph Ltd, and Vandagraph Sensor Technologies Ltd about what constitutes harassment, how to prevent it, and how to respond if it occurs in the workplace.

Introduction

This training provides an overview of our Anti-Harassment Policy and equips employees with the knowledge to create a safe and respectful workplace.

New Legal Duty:

As of 26 October 2024, all UK employers have a legal obligation under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment at work. This includes proactive actions such as risk assessments, cultural monitoring, and employee training.

1. Understanding Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (such as age, disability, race, religion, sex or gender) that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for the victim.

Forms of Harassment Include:

- **Verbal:** Offensive jokes, slurs, or comments.
- **Physical:** Unwanted touching, invasion of personal space.
- **Visual:** Sharing offensive images or materials.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwanted sexual advances or inappropriate gestures.

Examples:

- Repeated inappropriate comments about someone's appearance.
- Sending sexually explicit emails or messages.
- Spreading rumours or making derogatory remarks about a colleague's personal life.

2. Identifying Risk Factors for Harassment

- Isolated work environments or lone working situations
- Power imbalances, such as supervisor-employee relationships

- Events outside the office (e.g., business trips, social gatherings)
- A lack of diversity in teams, which can lead to exclusionary behaviour

3. Preventing Harassment in the Workplace

Employees are expected to:

- Treat everyone with dignity.
- Listen to concerns from colleagues.
- Avoid behaviours that could be offensive or inappropriate.

Managers must lead by example, proactively address issues, and ensure the workplace is harassment-free.

Legal Emphasis:

The Company's duty is not just to respond to harassment, but to actively prevent it by conducting regular risk assessments and monitoring workplace culture.

4. Reporting Procedures

If you experience or witness harassment:

1. **Speak up** if comfortable.
2. **Report** to your manager or HR.
3. **Document** the incident (date, time, people involved).

Third-Party Harassment:

Harassment from clients, visitors, or suppliers is taken just as seriously and must be reported.

5. What Happens After You Report

The HR department (or a designated team) will conduct a prompt, impartial investigation.

Both parties will be heard.

Appropriate action will be taken — this may include mediation, retraining, or disciplinary steps, up to and including termination.

6. Avoiding Retaliation

Retaliation is strictly prohibited.

If anyone attempts to intimidate, isolate, or punish someone for reporting harassment, that behaviour must also be reported and will result in disciplinary action.

7. Confidentiality in the Reporting Process

The Company will handle complaints with discretion.

Information will only be shared with individuals directly involved in the investigation or resolution.

8. Additional Measures

Legal Monitoring:

Monitoring effectiveness is now a legal requirement.

The Company uses risk assessments, employee feedback, and training reviews to evaluate and improve prevention efforts.

9. Case Studies for Training

These examples are based on realistic situations. Each includes **Company Response Guidance** to help staff understand how to act and what support is available.

Case Study 1: Inappropriate Comments

A manager makes repeated jokes about a colleague's appearance.

Questions:

- How should the employee respond?
- What should management do?

Company Response Guidance:

- The employee should be encouraged to raise the issue directly with the manager if they feel safe doing so, or report it to HR or another trusted person.
- Management must take any such complaint seriously, even if presented as "banter." It is never appropriate to make repeated personal comments that cause discomfort.
- The behaviour should be addressed through a formal conversation, with documentation and potential disciplinary action if repeated.
- The Company has a legal duty to prevent harassment, including from managers or senior staff.

Case Study 2: Social Media Misuse

Offensive memes are shared in a team group chat.

Questions:

- What options does the uncomfortable colleague have?

- How should the company respond?

Company Response Guidance:

- The colleague can report this informally or formally to HR or a line manager. The platform or time of day is irrelevant — if the communication affects the workplace, it is covered under the policy.
- The Company must assess the nature of the messages, speak to those involved, and take appropriate action (this may include a warning, removal from the group chat, or further training).
- Employees must be reminded that conduct outside work can still contribute to a hostile environment and will be addressed if it impacts staff wellbeing.

Case Study 3: Unwanted Physical Contact

A supervisor touches an employee on the shoulder repeatedly, even after being asked to stop.

Question:

- What is the correct response?

Company Response Guidance:

- The employee should report this behaviour to HR or another manager as soon as possible. The request to stop has been ignored, so it now escalates beyond inappropriate behaviour into a possible disciplinary matter.
- The Company must act swiftly to investigate, ensure the touching stops, and take action if misconduct is confirmed.
- Repeated unwanted physical contact is a serious breach of the harassment policy, regardless of intent.

Case Study 4: Age-based Humour

A colleague jokes about another employee's age regularly.

Questions:

- Is this appropriate?
- How should this be addressed respectfully?

Company Response Guidance:

- This is not appropriate. Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Repeated age-based jokes can be classified as harassment.
- The employee should feel safe to express discomfort or report the issue.
- Managers should intervene, even without a formal complaint, and remind the team that humour targeting personal traits can be harmful.

- Informal correction may be appropriate initially, but if behaviour continues, it must be formally addressed.

10. Key Takeaways

- Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Everyone is responsible for maintaining a respectful workplace.
- The Company has a legal duty to take preventative steps.
- Reporting is encouraged and protected — retaliation will not be tolerated.
- Failure to meet legal duties can result in increased compensation (up to 25%) at tribunal.

Acknowledgment Form

By signing below, I confirm that I have received, read, and understood the Anti-Harassment Training Document.

I agree to comply with the Company's policies on preventing and addressing harassment.

Name: LINDA SHEARING
Position: QA Assistant
Date: 29.10.25
Signature: Linda M Shearing