

Harassment risk assessment template

Sexual harassment and third-party harassment
Updated for the standard applying from 30 October 2026

Prepared by Electra HR Ltd. Reviewed by Vanessa Challess, solicitor, 23 years qualified. Legal review provided via Bonsai Law.

Why this document exists

From 30 October 2026 two duties apply to you, both introduced by the Employment Rights Act 2025 by amending the Equality Act 2010.

Section 20 requires you to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of your staff. The previous standard was reasonable steps. The addition of one word changes the question a tribunal asks, from whether what you did was reasonable to whether anything further was reasonably open to you that you did not do.

Section 21 provides that you must not permit a third party to harass your employee, and treats you as permitting it where the harassment occurs in the course of employment and you failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent it. A third party is anyone other than you or another of your employees. This duty is not confined to conduct of a sexual nature, because it sits in section 40 of the Equality Act, which covers harassment related to protected characteristics generally. It applies from the first incident, not the second.

Section 22 gives the government power to specify by regulations what counts as reasonable, and the first category listed is the carrying out of assessments. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's technical guidance already expects an employer to consider the risks of harassment occurring, consider what steps could reduce them, consider which of those are reasonable, and implement them. This document is that exercise. Complete it, keep it, act on it and review it. An unfinished copy in a folder is worse than none, because it records that you identified a risk and then left it there.

Acas is explicit that where you decide a step is not reasonable for your business, you should record why. Part 4 of this template is where you do that.

Where a sexual harassment claim succeeds and the preventative duty was breached, a tribunal can increase the compensation awarded by up to 25 per cent, under section 124A of the Equality Act 2010.

How to complete this

Work through it in order. It should take under two hours for a business of 5 to 50 people. Where a risk is identified, name a person and a date. "Ongoing" is not a date.

Rate each risk as low, medium or high on the basis of how likely the situation is to arise in your business and how serious the consequence would be if it did. You are not required to eliminate risk. You are required to reduce it so far as is reasonable for a business of your size, sector and resources.

Part 1: Business details

Field	Entry
Business name	
Sites covered by this assessment	
Total number of workers	

Field	Entry
Assessment completed by	
Job title	
Date completed	
Review date	
Version	

If you operate from more than one site, or if roles differ materially between sites, complete a separate Part 3 for each. A single assessment covering a shop floor and a head office will not survive scrutiny.

Part 2: What you already have

Answer honestly. A no here is not a failure, it is the point of the exercise.

Control	In place	Date last reviewed	Evidence held	Owner
Written anti-harassment policy, covering sexual harassment specifically	Yes / No			
Policy issued to every worker and acknowledgement recorded	Yes / No			
Policy covers harassment by third parties	Yes / No			
Code of conduct for customers, clients, contractors and suppliers	Yes / No			
At least two reporting routes, one bypassing the line manager	Yes / No			
Anonymous reporting option	Yes / No			
Harassment training delivered, with an attendance log	Yes / No			
Separate training for managers on handling complaints	Yes / No			
Incident log maintained, including third-party incidents	Yes / No			
Exit interviews or staff survey asking about harassment	Yes / No			
Named senior person accountable for this duty	Yes / No			

Control	In place	Date last reviewed	Evidence held	Owner
Scheduled review date in the calendar	Yes / No			

Any row marked No goes into Part 4 as an action.

Part 3: Risk assessment by situation

For each situation, consider whether it arises in your business, who is exposed, what could happen, what you already do, and what further step is reasonably available to you.

A. Working with the public or with clients

Situation	Arises in your business	Who is exposed	Risk rating	Existing controls	Further reasonable step available
Staff serve customers face to face	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff work alone with a customer or client	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff attend client or customer premises	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff visit private homes	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff handle complaints, debts, refusals or refunds	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff deal with intoxicated members of the public	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff are identifiable by name badge or uniform outside work	Yes / No		L / M / H		

B. Working environment and hours

Situation	Arises in your business	Who is exposed	Risk rating	Existing controls	Further reasonable step available
Evening, night or weekend working	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Lone working at any point	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Isolated areas on site, including stockrooms and car parks	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Travel between sites, or overnight stays	Yes / No		L / M / H		

Situation	Arises in your business	Who is exposed	Risk rating	Existing controls	Further reasonable step available
Work-related social events, including client entertaining	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Alcohol present at work or work events	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Remote or home working, including messaging and video calls	Yes / No		L / M / H		

C. Workforce composition and power

Situation	Arises in your business	Who is exposed	Risk rating	Existing controls	Further reasonable step available
Young workers, apprentices or those in their first job	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Agency, casual, zero-hours or probationary staff	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Migrant workers, or workers whose first language is not English	Yes / No		L / M / H		
A single worker isolated by a protected characteristic in their team	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Significant seniority gaps in day-to-day working pairs	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Managers who control shifts, pay, progression or references	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Personal relationships between staff at different levels	Yes / No		L / M / H		

D. Third parties specifically

This section addresses the duty that is new on 30 October 2026. It covers harassment related to protected characteristics generally, not only conduct of a sexual nature. Third parties include customers, clients, service users such as patients or students, self-employed contractors and tradespeople, people at conferences and events, and members of the public in shared spaces. It can occur in person or online.

Situation	Arises in your business	Who is exposed	Risk rating	Existing controls	Further reasonable step available
Customers or clients make remarks about a worker's sex or appearance	Yes / No		L / M / H		

Situation	Arises in your business	Who is exposed	Risk rating	Existing controls	Further reasonable step available
Customers make remarks about race, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Contractors or suppliers work alongside your staff	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Delivery drivers, engineers or visitors enter your premises	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Your staff work on a site controlled by another business	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Online abuse of staff through your social media, reviews or inbox	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Customer, client and supplier contracts and terms carry no conduct obligations	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Nothing tells customers what the consequences of harassing your staff will be	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff have no authority to end an interaction or refuse service	Yes / No		L / M / H		

That last row is the one most employers miss. If a worker cannot walk away, cannot refuse service and cannot summon a manager, the control does not exist however good the policy is.

E. Reporting and response

Situation	Arises in your business	Who is exposed	Risk rating	Existing controls	Further reasonable step available
Complaints would go to the person complained about	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Staff have said, or are likely to think, that reporting would not be acted on	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Previous complaints closed without a recorded outcome	Yes / No		L / M / H		
Managers have had no training on receiving a disclosure	Yes / No		L / M / H		
No route to raise a concern about a third party	Yes / No		L / M / H		

Part 4: Action plan

Every No in Part 2, and every further reasonable step identified in Part 3, comes here. This table is the document a tribunal will find most persuasive, and the one that is most often blank.

Ref	Action	Why it is reasonable for this business	Owner	Target date	Completed date	Evidence
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

If you have decided that a step is not reasonable for your business, write that down here with your reason, rather than leaving the row empty. Acas expressly advises recording why a step you considered was not taken, including where a step is reasonable for some of your staff but not all of them. A recorded and reasoned decision not to do something is defensible. Silence is not.

Part 5: Incident log

Keep this running, separately from personnel files. Patterns are what turn an isolated incident into a foreseeable risk you failed to control.

Date	Site	Reported by	Reported to	Nature of incident	Third party involved	Protected characteristic engaged	Action taken	Outcome date
					Yes / No			

Part 6: Sign off and review

Field	Entry
Assessment approved by	
Position	
Date	
Actions in Part 4 all complete	Yes / No

Field	Entry
Next review date	
Trigger events requiring earlier review	New site, significant change in workforce, any reported incident, any change in the law

When to take legal advice

This template helps you build a defence. It does not answer the harder questions, and some of them carry real consequences if answered wrongly.

Take advice where an allegation involves a senior person or a director, where dismissal is a likely outcome, where the complainant has raised the matter as a protected disclosure, where a third party is a significant customer you would be commercially reluctant to lose, or where you think the matter may end up at a tribunal. Note also that from 1 October 2026 the time limit for bringing most tribunal claims rises from three months to six months less one day, so files created now will be scrutinised considerably later than you might expect.

Electra HR provides the HR process, the documentation and the investigation. Where a matter needs legal advice, or looks likely to become litigation, solicitor-led legal support is available via Bonsai Law.

Sources

Employment Rights Act 2025, protection from harassment and discrimination, sections 20 to 22:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/36/part/1/crossheading/protection-from-harassment-and-discrimination>

Equality Act 2010, section 26, definition of harassment: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/26>

Equality Act 2010, section 40A, duty to prevent sexual harassment: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/40A>

Equality Act 2010, section 124A, compensation uplift: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/124A>

Equality and Human Rights Commission, employer eight step guide to preventing sexual harassment at work:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/employer-8-step-guide-preventing-sexual-harassment-work>

Equality and Human Rights Commission, sexual harassment and harassment at work technical guidance:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/sexual-harassment-and-harassment-work-technical-guidance>

Acas, harassment law changes under the Employment Rights Act 2025: <https://www.acas.org.uk/employment-rights-act-2025/harassment-law-changes>

business.gov.uk, workplace sexual harassment and third-party harassment:

<https://www.business.gov.uk/campaign/employment-changes/employers/workplace-sexual-harassment-and-third-party-harassment/>

These duties apply in England, Wales and Scotland. Equality and discrimination law is devolved in Northern Ireland.

This template is general information about legal duties and is not legal advice on your specific situation. Electra HR Ltd, company number 11077627.