

Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Policy

Scope of Policy

Following the change of law from the **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023**, Priory Medical Group (PMG) recognises the importance of keeping all our staff safe and protected from any potential form of sexual harassment from managers, other colleagues, patients and any third parties, both whilst at work, working from home and whilst attending work related events.

A full risk assessment will be conducted on annual basis to assess the levels of risk, our staff may be exposed to, and preventative measures put in place to mitigate for any areas of risk identified.

Suitable mandatory training will be sourced and provided to all staff including managers on how to recognise sexual harassment, what to do if you see someone being sexually harassed and appropriate ways to report and manage incidents of sexual harassment at work.

Clear signs will be visible in staff communal areas and patient waiting rooms advising both patients and staff of PMG's zero tolerance policy towards any form of sexual harassment of our staff.

We actively encourage and support all our staff to call out any behaviour they feel constitutes sexual harassment and to report the incident to an appropriate person so that appropriate action can be taken.

We will also provide support and resources where possible to any staff member who is the unfortunate victim of sexual harassment or witnesses sexual harassment taking place whilst at work or at a work-related event.

For those patients found to be responsible for sexual harassing any of our staff, a clear zero tolerance approach will also be taken and could result in them being removed as a patient.

Any staff member who is deemed to have sexually harassed another fellow staff member will be subject to the company disciplinary policy and possible disciplinary formal action following a full investigation.

Definitions

Sexual Harassment – a form of personal harassment. This occurs when: someone is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or related to sex, or related to gender reassignment.

Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Sexual Harassment can take place through, for example:

- **Face to face contact**
- **Written communications**
- **Email**
- **Telephone**
- **Social Media**

This policy covers sexual harassment involving staff members both whilst and also outside of work at work related events.

Sexual harassment as a form of discrimination can take many forms and happen anywhere. Some important things to know about sexual harassment:

- It is the person receiving the sexual behaviour who decides if it's unwanted – NOT the person doing the behaviour.
- It doesn't matter if other people think the unwanted sexual behaviour is okay. Or if it's common in the place it's happened in.
- It can be a one-off incident or repeated.
- Just because certain sexual behaviour was welcomed or not objected to in the past doesn't mean that it can't become unwanted. Or that other sexual behaviour is wanted.



- Unwanted sexual behaviour doesn't need to be intentionally directed at the victim or survivor – it can be something they witness or overhear.
- Both the harasser and the victim or survivor can be of any gender.

Some examples of sexual harassment include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Verbal harassment: Making sexual comments about someone's body, clothing, or appearance, asking sexual questions, or telling sexual jokes.
- Non-verbal harassment: Staring, following, or blocking someone's path, or using sexually suggestive visuals.
- Physical harassment: Touching someone against their will, such as hugging, kissing, or patting.
- Online harassment: Sending sexual emails or texts or posting sexual content on social media.
- Other harassment: Pressuring someone for dates, repeatedly propositioning someone, or spreading rumours about someone's sex life.

Some forms of sexual harassment automatically break criminal law in England and Wales and are therefore crimes. These include:

- stalking
- indecent exposure
- 'upskirting'
- any sexual harassment involving physical contact (this amounts to sexual assault in English and Welsh law)
- Other forms of sexual harassment might also break criminal law, depending on the situation. For example, if someone carries out sexual harassment behaviours on more than one occasion that are intended to cause another person alarm or distress, they may be committing the crime of harassment.

Reporting Sexual Harassment

Should you believe you are a potential victim of sexual harassment or have witnessed other staff potentially being sexually harassed or sexually harassing a colleague(s) then if appropriate please speak to your Line Manager, Senior Manager and or Partner in the first instance.

If you feel that speaking to them is not appropriate then please contact HR or the **Freedom to Speak Up Guardian** who will actively listen to your complaint, look into the issue further, provide and signpost you to further support where necessary and advise next steps.

Should the issue need to be escalated, then HR will initiate a further investigation to be conducted by an independent senior member of the organisation in line with company policy.

The outcome of the investigation or any subsequent disciplinary action that is taken will be advised to you as soon as possible (if applicable).

Anyone found to have committed sexual harassment via the company disciplinary process may depending on severity be expected to issue an apology to the victim, attend counselling, moved to work at another site, demoted, dismissed or be subject to any other form of disciplinary action.

In cases where the law has been broken either by a staff member, patient or other third party, then the incident will be reported to the police, and this could result in criminal action being taken against them.

If as a result of being involved or being perceived to be involved in a sexual harassment complaint you are victimised i.e. treated less favourably then please notify HR immediately, who will take all appropriate action to look into the matter and take any action deemed fair and appropriate in line with the company policy on victimisation.

Sexual Harassment outside of work

Should you be invited to attend a work event (social or otherwise) or business meeting or training course offsite during or outside of working hours, or whilst working from home then we would expect the same levels of professionalism,



conduct and behaviour of all our staff at such events as we would expect of them whilst onsite.

Likewise, it is our duty of care to protect all staff in these circumstances from any sexual harassment they may be subjected to, from fellow staff, patients and any other third parties.

Please note that the same action will be taken in these situations as would be taken if the incident(s) occur on site and during working hours.

General Notes

When conducting work meetings with colleagues, we would strongly advise that you hold non-confidential meetings with the door open, undertake educational meetings as a group and do not hold any meetings at your or your colleague's homes.

It is also recommended that staff confidentially disclose to HR and/or Line Manager any personal relationships that they have with other members of staff.

Support for Victims of Sexual Harassment

Should you unfortunately find yourself the victim of sexual harassment or have witnessed sexual harassment of others whether it be at work or outside of work then there are lots of help and support available to you. Alongside the staff wellbeing resources available to our staff including counselling, there is also available a wide range of support available to all some of which can be found on the following GOV link.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-sexual-harassment>

Reviewed 18th October 2024

Reviewed by Joanne Fox – HR Manager

Next Review due 18th October 2025