

Risk Assessment – Preventing Sexual Harassment

Purpose

The aim of this risk assessment is to prevent sexual harassment during the course of employment. It considers the potential risks to all employees and workers, as well as third parties who are engaged with us to carry out services such as those who are self-employed and agency workers. Carrying out this assessment will allow us to identify, assess and mitigate risks associated with sexual harassment in the workplace and will help to create a safe and respectful working environment and promote a positive workplace culture. It also supports the Bentham Town Council compliance with its legal obligation of taking reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment from occurring in the course of employment. This assessment is kept under continuous review to ensure existing prevention measures remain adequate. Reviews will take place at least annually, with ad-hoc reviews taking place where circumstances require. This could be if there is a change to the demographics of the workforce or working arrangements, or where we have received complaints of sexual harassment taking place.

An action plan will then be created and monitored on the back of this risk assessment. See our template [Action Plan – Preventing Sexual Harassment](#).

Bentham Town Council encourages all employees and workers to inform their line manager of areas in which they believe sexual harassment protection could be further improved.

Completing the assessment

Please follow the instructions below to ensure that the assessment and accompanying action plan is completed thoroughly and accurately:

Considerations

Considerations are the elements of potential risk. Indicate those that apply and those that don't, e.g. if some people work at night or whether there is alcohol sold on the premises, etc.

Hazard

A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm, e.g. power imbalances, coercion, differences in cultural expectations, etc.

- **Who might be harmed:** Consider all employees and workers who could be affected by each identified hazard. This may include employees, workers, those with specific roles, or those who may have vulnerabilities, e.g. waiting staff, travel-based sales staff, bar staff, young workers, etc.

- **Level of risk:** The level of risk is determined by considering both the likelihood of the hazard occurring and the severity of its potential consequences. If in doubt, err on the side of caution.
 - **Low risk:** Indicates that the likelihood of the hazard occurring is rare and the potential consequences are minimal.
 - **Medium risk:** Indicates that the likelihood of the hazard occurring is moderate and the potential consequences could result in sexual harassment occurring.
 - **High risk:** Indicates that the hazard is likely to occur and could result in sexual harassment taking place. This level of risk requires immediate attention and action to eliminate or substantially reduce it.

Bentham Town Council risk assessment for the prevention of sexual harassment during the course of employment

Risk assessment owner:	Bentham Town Council
Assessment date:	16.06.26
Assessment carried out by:	Claire Burrow Town Clerk and RFO
Work location:	Bentham Town Hall
Next scheduled assessment date:	16.06.27
Version number:	1

Potential hazards, risks and proposed actions in prevention

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Workforce demographics:									
Is anyone required to work at night?	Y		Lone working at night, aggression, trips, slips or fall	All staff		MED		Lone Working Policy in place. Lone working training provided to all staff. Staff to inform partner/family member when locking up and	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
								provide estimated time of arrival home. Work mobile phone to be carried at all times. CCTV covers main entrances and exits. External lighting maintained. Staff authorised to leave the area and contact emergency services if they feel unsafe.	
Are there lone workers or people working in isolated workplaces?	Y		Harassment, aggression, intimidation from members of the public, councillors, hirers or contractors	All staff		MED		Work mobile phone carried at all times. Lone Working Policy and training in place. Staff encouraged to report concerns immediately. CCTV coverage within the Town Hall. Office layout provides visibility of visitors and clear access to exits.	16.06.26
Is there anyone who works with just one other employee/worker?	Y		Potential harassment, inappropriate behaviour or allegations without witnesses	All staff	LOW			Anti-Harassment Policy in place. Clear reporting procedures. Open-door culture encouraged. Multiple routes available for reporting concerns.	06.07.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
								Staff supported by Town Clerk, Chair of Council, Monitoring Officer and external HR provider where appropriate.	
Do your employees/workers interact with third parties, e.g. contractors or members of the public?	Y		Harassment, intimidation, inappropriate comments or behaviour	All staff		MED		Anti-Harassment Policy applies to third-party interactions. CCTV coverage. Staff not expected to tolerate inappropriate behaviour. Incidents recorded and investigated. Repeat offenders may be restricted from Council premises where appropriate.	06.07.26
Do any of your employees/workers work alone with a third party?	Y		Sexual harassment, intimidation, aggression, false allegations	All Staff		MED		Office designed so staff can see visitors entering. Clerk's workstation positioned with escape route available at all times. CCTV covers majority of office space. Staff may terminate meetings if uncomfortable and report concerns immediately.	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Do you require your employees/workers to attend the workplace of a third party or attend offsite locations?	Y		Harassment, intimidation, lone working risks	Caretaker, Deputy and Clerk		MED		Staff carry mobile phones and advise colleagues of whereabouts and expected return times. Lone Working Policy applies to off-site visits. Visits undertaken during normal working hours where possible. Concerns reported immediately.	16.06.26
Are members of staff expected to socialise with third parties, e.g. at events or conferences with contractors or clients?		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			N/A	
Do employees/workers attend offsite events?	Y		Harassment or inappropriate conduct from third parties	Staff, Councillors	LOW			Professional standards expected at all times. Anti-Harassment Policy applies to work-related events. Concerns can be reported through normal reporting procedures.	06.07.26
Are there any employees or workers who travel and work abroad?		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			N/A	

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Are there high pressured, competitive or stressful environments within your organisation?	Y		Stress related illnesses	All staff	LOW			Regular communication between staff and management. Workloads monitored through appraisal and supervision processes.	16.06.26
Is there a higher representation of one gender in your workplace?	Y		Potential power imbalance and increased risk of gender-based harassment	All staff		MED		Anti-Harassment Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy and grievance procedures in place. Complaints investigated promptly. External HR advice available through YLCA via WorkNest.	06.07.26
Are there areas of power imbalances in the workplace?	Y		Abuse of position or authority	All staff		MED		Council decisions made collectively through Full Council and Finance/Staffing Committee. Multiple reporting routes available. 'Open door' policy for staff with line managers. External HR advice available. Councillor complaints referred to the North Yorkshire Monitoring Officer.	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Vulnerable employees and workers: Evidence shows that vulnerable employees and workers can be exposed to greater risk from harassment than those who are not. In this section, assess the risk of those groups that are relevant to your workplace:									
Women	Y		Sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour	All female staff		MED		Anti-Harassment Policy, grievance procedures, confidential reporting routes, support from management, Chair of Council and external HR advisers.	06.07.26
LGBTQ+		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			Equality and Diversity Policy applies to all staff.	16.06.26
Young workers		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			Equality and Diversity Policy applies to all staff.	16.06.26
Someone with a disability (mental or physical)		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			Equality and Diversity Policy applies to all staff.	16.06.26
Black and minority ethnic workers		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			Equality and Diversity Policy applies to all staff.	16.06.26
Non-UK nationals, including those who may not be confident in making a complaint in		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			Equality and Diversity Policy applies to all staff.	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
English or for whom English is not their first language									
Low-paid earners	Y		Reluctance to report concerns due to perceived job insecurity	Caretaker and Cleaner	LOW			Multiple reporting routes available. Concerns treated confidentially. Support available through management.	16.06.26
Home workers	Y		Online harassment, isolation	Clerk and Deputy	LOW			IT and Social Media Policies apply to remote working. Regular contact maintained. Reporting procedures apply equally to home working. Homeworking policy and risk assessment.	16.06.26
Lone workers	Y		Harassment, aggression, intimidation	All staff		MED		Lone Working Policy, lone working training, work mobile phones, CCTV coverage, reporting procedures and management support.	16.06.26
Agency workers		N	N/A		LOW			N/A	16.06.26
Casual workers		N	N/A		LOW			N/A	16.06.26
Those on fixed term or zero-hour contracts		N	N/A		LOW			N/A	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Policy:									
Do you have a clearly written anti-harassment policy that deals with the prevention of sexual harassment?	Y		Failure to prevent harassment	All staff		MED		Anti-Harassment Policy currently being adopted by Council. Policy communicated to staff and councillors. Annual review to be undertaken.	06.07.26 annually to be reviewed
Do you address third-party harassment in your policy and take reasonable steps to prevent it?	Y		Harassment by hirers, contractors or members of the public	All staff	LOW			Policy specifically references third-party harassment and reporting arrangements.	06.07.26
Is your anti-harassment policy easily accessible to all employees?	Y		Lack of awareness	All staff	LOW			Policy available electronically and in hard copy.	06.07.26
Do you re-circulate your policy or remind staff members of where and how to access the policy on a regular basis, including when changes are made?	Y		Lack of awareness	All staff	LOW			Policy available electronically, in hard copy, re-circulate annually.	06.07.26
Do you regularly review, monitor and update your anti-harassment policy?	Y		Policy becoming ineffective	All staff	LOW			Annual review and following incidents or legislative changes.	06.07.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
In your disciplinary policy, do you specify that sexual harassment is considered a potential act of gross misconduct and could lead to someone's summary dismissal?		N	Inappropriate behaviour not challenged	All staff	LOW			Alter the disciplinary policy to ensure sexual harassment is considered a potential act of gross misconduct,	ongoing
Do policies on the use of IT communication systems and social media include appropriate warnings against online harassment, and how to report concerns?	Y		Online harassment	All staff	LOW			IT and social media policies set expected standards and reporting arrangements.	16.06.26
Do you have policies regarding proper use of social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram or X?	Y		Online harassment	All staff	LOW			Social media policies set expected standards and reporting arrangements.	16.06.26
Is there a policy for workplace relationships?		N	Potential conflicts of interest, perceptions of favouritism, or boundary issues	All staff	LOW			Council relies on Code of Conduct, disciplinary policy and professional standards. This should be kept under review due to	On going

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
			in a small workplace					small team size and lone working arrangements.	
Do your anti-harassment policies align to all other company policies such as homeworking, lone working, and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)?	Y		Inconsistent application of safeguarding and behavioural expectations if policies were not aligned	All staff	LOW			Anti-harassment policy is aligned with lone working, homeworking, IT, social media, Equality & Diversity and disciplinary policies. Controls are strengthened by mobile phones for all staff, lone working policy, CCTV coverage and established reporting routes	06.07.26
Training:									
Do you carry out EDI training that covers sexual harassment as part of the induction/onboarding process?		N	Lack of awareness of acceptable behaviour	All staff and councillors			HIGH	Introduce mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training including sexual harassment awareness for all staff and councillors.	
Do you carry out EDI training that covers sexual harassment on an annual basis?		N	Failure to identify and prevent harassment	All staff and councillors			HIGH	Annual refresher training to be implemented and recorded.	

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Do you provide separate training to line managers (to that which is given to employees and workers)?		N	Inconsistent complaint handling	Clerk, Chair, Staffing Committee		MED		Provide management-specific training on handling complaints and investigations.	
Do you provide EDI training that is specific to your workplace and that uses case studies or scenarios that relate to your organisation?		N	Lack of awareness of appropriate behaviour in a small council environment; reduced understanding of real-life workplace scenarios such as lone working, councillor/staff boundaries, and contractor interactions	All staff (all female workforce)		MED		Introduce workplace-specific EDI training tailored to Town Council scenarios, including councillor/staff interactions, lone working, contractors, hirers and members of the public.	
Do you provide refresher EDI training when circumstances warrant it, e.g. when there is a change in working arrangements		N	Reduced ability to reinforce standards following incidents or changes; risk of repeated or	All staff		MED		Implement scheduled refresher EDI and sexual harassment training, with additional training triggered after incidents, complaints, policy	

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
or workforce demographics, or after receiving a complaint of sexual harassment?			unaddressed inappropriate behaviour					updates, or changes in working arrangements.	
Management structure:									
Is there a higher representation of one gender in the leadership team?	Y		Potential gender imbalance in decision-making body and perceived lack of representation	Staff and councillors	LOW			Council comprises mainly male councillors. Decisions are made collectively through Full Council and committees. Equality & Diversity Policy in place.	16.06.26
Are there areas of the business that have power imbalances?	Y		Risk of authority being misused or perceived pressure on staff due to councillor/staff hierarchy	All staff		MED		Clear separation between elected members and staff roles. External HR support (YLCA) Monitoring Officer route for councillor complaints. Anti-harassment policy under development.	ongoing
Are there areas of the business where company policies aren't adhered to?		N	Risk of inconsistent application of procedures	All staff	LOW			Policies are in place and communicated to staff and councillors; compliance overseen by Clerk and Council committees.	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Is decision making concentrated, i.e. only a few individuals at the top of the business can make decisions?		N	Risk of undue influence or lack of oversight	All staff	LOW			Decision-making is distributed across Full Council and Finance and Staffing Committee	16.06.26
Is there an HR team, or access to an external HR outsourcing provider?	Y	N	Lack of HR expertise in handling complex staff matters	Staff and councillors	LOW			External HR support provided via Yorkshire Local Councils Associations Clerk requested management training during appraisal, beginning CILCA in September 2026	ongoing
Do leaders have individual authority over recruitment practices?		N	Risk of unfair recruitment decisions	Applicants and staff	LOW			Recruitment decisions made collectively and supported by Council procedures.	16.06.26
Do leaders have individual authority on pay decisions?		N	Risk of inconsistent pay decisions	All staff	LOW			Pay decisions determined through Council approval processes and committees.	16.06.26
Working environment:									
Do you have an IT policy that sets the rules for appropriate usage?	Y		Misuse of IT systems or inappropriate communication	All staff	LOW			IT and communications policies in place and communicated.	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Do you monitor and address inappropriate behaviour on digital platforms?	Y		Online harassment or inappropriate messaging	All staff	LOW			Policies in place covering IT, email, and social media; incidents addressed through disciplinary procedures.	16.06.26
Do employees travel abroad for business?		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			N/A	16.06.26
Are there sexualised or sexist materials on display such as calendars or posters?		N	Exposure to inappropriate materials	All staff	LOW			Workplace maintained as professional environment.	16.06.26
Is there adequate privacy or security for workers using bathrooms or changing rooms?	Y		Privacy or dignity concerns	All staff	LOW			Facilities considered adequate for staff use	16.06.26
Do you have areas that are isolated or with inadequate lighting or security?	Y		Lone working risk, harassment, or vulnerability in isolated areas (rear office, external sites)	All staff		MED		CCTV in place, lone working policy, mobile phones issued, staff inform colleagues of whereabouts, escape routes in office layout.	16.06.26
Are there different uniform requirements between genders, or prescriptive dress codes or expectations for either gender?		N	Discrimination or inequality concerns	All staff	LOW			No gender-specific uniform requirements.	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Are workers required to travel and have overnight stays?		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			N/A	16.06.26
Do employees and workers travel to remote locations?	Y		Lone working risk, isolation, public interaction risk	All staff		MED		Lone working procedures, mobile phones, staff reporting movements, site risk awareness.	16.06.26
Do you provide accommodation facilities for employees?		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			N/A	16.06.26
Are sexist jokes prevalent in the workplace?		N	Harassment or hostile environment	All staff	LOW			Code of conduct and expected standards of behaviour in place.	16.06.26
Do workers engage with social drinking on site?		N	N/A	N/A	LOW			N/A	16.06.26
Do you have high staff turnover, particularly of female workers, young workers, or low-paid earners?			N/A	N/A	LOW			Stable workforce	16.06.26
Have you been informed that some workers are more reluctant to work with certain workers or take on certain tasks?	Y		Potential breakdown in trust following previous incident	Deputy	LOW			Monitoring by Clerk, HR support, reporting routes reinforced, safeguarding and harassment policy under development.	ongoing

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Do you have clear and effective procedures for receiving and responding to complaints of sexual harassment?	Y		Complaints not acted upon	All staff		MED		Complaints concerning staff made to the Clerk. Complaints concerning the Clerk made to the Chair of Council and Council. Complaints concerning councillors referred to the North Yorkshire Monitoring Officer.	16.06.26
Are there multiple, confidential ways for employees to report harassment?	Y		Employees reluctant to report concerns	All staff		MED		Staff may report to the Clerk, Chair of Council, Staffing Committee, Monitoring Officer or through HR support arrangements.	16.06.26
Are your workers able to access management who are outside of their direct reporting line?	Y		Risk that concerns may not be raised if direct line management is involved in the issue; potential lack of independent escalation route	All staff	LOW			Staff can access alternative reporting routes including the Town Clerk, Chair of Council, Staffing Committee and external HR support (YLCA) Formal complaints routes also exist via the Monitoring Officer for councillor-related issues, ensuring independent escalation is available.	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
Is your workforce so small that confidentiality and confidence to raise issues may be difficult to achieve?	Y		Reluctance to report concerns	All staff		MED		Confidentiality maintained wherever possible. External HR support available through YLCA. Alternative reporting routes available.	16.06.26
Have there been previous cases of harassment?	Y		Repeat occurrence of harassment	All staff			HIGH	Anti-Harassment Policy being implemented. Future EDI and sexual harassment training to be introduced. Complaints investigated promptly. Annual review of harassment risks and control measures.	06.07.26 policy Members directed to watch Quick Insights webinar titled Sexual Harassment Legislation
Are line managers consistent at, and do they enforce, disciplinary and grievance policies?	Y		Inconsistent application could undermine trust or fairness	All staff	LOW			Policies are applied consistently by Town Clerk and Council committees; external HR advice available via YLCA/WorkNest supports consistency.	16.06.26
Do you ensure prompt, thorough and impartial	Y		Delayed or inconsistent	All staff	LOW			Clear grievance procedures in place;	16.06.26

Considerations	Yes	No	Hazard	Who might be harmed	Level of risk			Preventative action	Date completed
					Low	Med	High		
investigations of sexual harassment complaints?			investigations could increase harm or liability					escalation to external HR support and Monitoring Officer where required; Council ensures impartial handling of councillor-related complaints.	
Are there support systems in place for victims of sexual harassment such as counselling services, or employee assistance programmes?		N	Lack of emotional or welfare support following incidents	All staff		MED		Introduce Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) access or equivalent support; signposting to counselling services; ensure staff are aware of available external support routes.	
Do staff report a culture of banter or casual sexism which is hard to challenge?		N	Potential normalisation of inappropriate behaviour	All staff	LOW			Code of conduct and expected behaviour standards in place; harassment policy being developed; open reporting culture encouraged.	16.06.26
Do you audit your work practices to ensure they continue to remain fit for purpose and prevent sexual harassment?		N	Policies may become outdated or ineffective over time	All staff	LOW			Introduce annual audit and review of harassment prevention measures, including policy review, training uptake, incident analysis, and workplace culture checks.	16.06.26

[illegible]