Sexual harassment awareness in hospitality: examples for staff briefings

A hospitality briefing on unwanted sexual behaviour needs a usable reporting route for concerns involving colleagues, managers, customers and contractors. Tell staff where to raise a concern if their usual supervisor is involved. Give the team time to practise receiving a report respectfully. A person should be able to explain what happened without having to decide the legal classification before seeking help.

GB staff awareness, including hospitality customers and colleagues; organisational policy supplies reporting contacts.

The practical principles

Recognise the behaviour

Sexual harassment can involve unwanted sexual comments, images, messages, gestures or touching. It can happen during a shift, in a staff chat or at a work-related social event. People experience conduct differently; labelling something a joke does not settle its effect. Customers, colleagues and managers can be involved. Respect boundaries, keep communication appropriate and respond seriously when someone says behaviour is unwelcome.

Support a person raising a concern

Listen calmly, acknowledge what they have told you and ask what immediate support they need. Explain the reporting options and handle information discreetly. If safe, a bystander can interrupt the situation or get assistance; direct confrontation may increase risk. A staff member should have a reporting route that works when their usual manager is involved. Preserve relevant messages through the approved process.

Prevention is a daily practice

Checked on 6 November 2026: since 30 October 2026, employers in Great Britain must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and must not permit harassment of employees by third parties. These changes apply in England, Wales and Scotland, not Northern Ireland. See current Acas guidance and the government's dated change notice. Training supports a wider system of policies, reporting, appropriate responses and action on recurring risks. Before late shifts, know the assistance arrangements and who is responsible for complaints. Report patterns such as a customer repeatedly targeting new staff. Keep concern records factual and share them only with people responsible for handling the matter.

Work through a shift scenario

Fictional exercise: a guest repeatedly makes sexual comments to a server and a colleague dismisses them as part of the job. The receiving supervisor listens, checks immediate safety and uses the organisation's procedure to address the situation and arrange support. The record should separate what was reported from what the supervisor directly observed. Discuss who needs the information and how unnecessary circulation will be avoided.

Avoid the common failure

A briefing attendance tick does not show that a reporting route works. Check that contact details are current and the alternative contact is reachable. Managers should use current EHRC guidance for their prevention arrangements. This staff article does not attempt to settle an individual employment dispute or reproduce every employer duty.

A second situation to discuss

Fictional scenario: A regular customer sends sexual messages to a bartender. The bartender worries that reporting it will cost them popular shifts.

Take the concern seriously and help them use an appropriate reporting route, including an alternative to their line manager. Preserve relevant messages securely and involve the designated manager in immediate support and protective arrangements. The complaint needs a proper response.

Use a working record

Record the specific arrangements below before the briefing. Keep the wording short enough for a colleague to use during the shift. Where a field does not apply, explain why; where information is missing, assign a person to resolve it. Store personal or sensitive details in the business's approved system.

- Reporting routes
- alternative contact
- immediate support
- restricted record location
- next action
- agreed follow-up

At the next handover, ask what changed, which action remains open and who now owns it. Close the record only when the agreed follow-up is complete. A recurring problem should inform the next briefing and the relevant operational procedure.

Check understanding

Harassment can occur:

In work-related messages as well as in person Sexual conduct can occur through several channels and involve third parties.

A colleague reports unwelcome conduct. First:

Listen and ask about immediate support A sensitive response helps the concern reach the right route.

A worker asks to leave a table after repeated sexual comments

A server tells the duty manager that a group has made repeated sexual remarks and asks to be moved. The manager has ten other tables to seat. What should happen in the next few minutes?

Compare your decision

Address the immediate safety and support needs, arrange cover and listen privately. Use the workplace reporting procedure and explain who will handle the information. Avoid making the worker confront the customers or treating a table swap as the whole response.

Record the worker’s account accurately and agree how the responsible manager will follow up. Check what practical controls the next shift needs for the same group.

Sources and scope

- Source: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/preventing-sexual-harassment-work-checklist-and-action-plan-employers
- Source: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

Original workplace examples and suggested record. Prepared 19 October 2026. Use the current linked guidance and the venue’s procedures for operational decisions.

Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details