

[REDACTED]

From: Staff Message
Sent: 13 November 2017 10:12
To: DL All Exchange Users; SASA External Contacts
Subject: Sexual harassment at work Permanent Secretary update

Importance: High

Expires: 31 December 2018 17:00

I wrote to you recently about the media reports alleging sexual harassment in Westminster and the Scottish Parliament and to reinforce that there is no place in the Scottish Government for such behaviour.

I highlighted the support available for staff and methods for raising issues. I also committed to reviewing our internal policies and procedures - this work is underway.

Press coverage continues and events of the past week emphasise the need for openness in our workplace and for complaints to be addressed in a balanced and sensitive way which ensures all parties are treated with dignity and respect.

I write again today because I feel that it is important to keep talking about this issue and reinforcing our wider commitment to consistently positive and inclusive culture throughout the Scottish Government. Many of you have heard me say *What you permit, you promote*. This moment represents an opportunity to effect real cultural and societal change regarding behaviours in the workplace, including our own.

We have had some feedback that we risk an over-reaction to office banter, which doesn't mean any harm. Let's be clear - allowing low level, discriminatory language to become 'normal' is not banter. It leaves people feeling uncomfortable, belittled, disempowered and unsafe. We want an environment where colleagues can come forward with their experiences and know they will be taken seriously.

As your employer we have a responsibility and a duty of care to everyone to ensure the working environment and culture reflects our values as civil servants. So I encourage you to talk to your colleagues and managers. Take this opportunity to reflect on your own team's culture and your behaviours towards each other. Does it feel comfortable for everyone in the team? Is everyone included – do you each have a voice? If not, what do you need to do to change that?

The sources of support outlined in my previous letter remain. In addition I have asked Gillian Russell to act as a confidential sounding board for those who have experienced sexual harassment, whether current or in the past. This is not to replace professional functions and advice in the People Directorate, nor displace the important role of Trade Unions or other formal support structures. It is simply to provide another option for those who would like a private, informal and supportive space. Gillian will listen – and she will signpost and guide you to other support, or a move to more formal action if required. She can be reached confidentially via text – [REDACTED].

I am aware that some staff have been contacted by the media. It is standard practice to redirect journalists to submit requests through the newsdesk – 0131 244 0222. If you have concerns please contact [REDACTED] or Barbara Allison [REDACTED].

This issue – and the inclusive culture of our organisation - remains at the top of my agenda and that of all senior leaders in the SG. Please contact one of us if you are concerned.

Reminder of contacts

- Either [Head of Branch, People Directorate 4] or [Head of Branch, People Directorate 3]. [Head of Branch, People Directorate 4] and [Head of Branch, People Directorate 3] [REDACTED].

Reminder of support

- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can provide emotional and practical support on a range of issues through trained welfare and counselling practitioners offering confidential, independent and unbiased information and guidance. Call free on [REDACTED]. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The EAP can refer staff to 1-2-1 counselling support, this would be accessed through the member of staff calling the EAP helpline.
- We have in-house access to a Counselling and Wellbeing Officer, [REDACTED] who can be contacted on ext. [REDACTED].
- If you are a member of a trade union you can seek support from your local trade union representative.
- The Employee Assistance Programme also provides support for line managers who are dealing with sensitive or traumatic situations. This is available through the EAP Helpline on [REDACTED].

Leslie Evans
Permanent Secretary