

# Re: Review of sexual harassment policies

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**From:** [REDACTED - MS A] <[REDACTED - MS A]@gov.scot> Permanent Secretary  
**To:** <permanentsecretary@gov.scot> Sat, 04 Nov 2017  
**Date:** 20:10:16 +0000

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Thanks [Private Secretary 2], that's encouraging to hear. And absolutely, I'd be very happy for my comments to be fed in to the review; no need to redact my name!

[REDACTED - MS A]

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**From:** Permanent Secretary  
**Sent:** Friday, 3 November 2017 16:11  
**To:** [REDACTED - MS A]  
**Cc:** Permanent Secretary  
**Subject:** RE: Review of sexual harassment policies

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Hi [REDACTED - MS A]

Leslie is out the office today – but has seen your email. You make an absolutely key point and Leslie wanted to assure you that the option of an independent contact point is already in the mix. You may not have seen the full version of her message <http://saltire/Pages/Review-of-sexual-harassment-policies.aspx> which is explicit on this point saying “Everyone must be consulted at any issues raised with care and discretion – so the review will also consider options such as an independent contact point.” We wanted to ask if you would be happy for us to feed your thoughts into the review – happy to redact your name if you prefer?

[Private Secretary 2]

[\[Private Secretary 2\]](#) | [\[REDACTED\]](#) | [\[REDACTED\]](#)

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**From:** [REDACTED - MS A]  
**Sent:** 03 November 2017 12:03  
**To:** Permanent Secretary  
**Subject:** Review of sexual harassment policies

Hello,

I'm getting in touch in response to yesterday's email to staff about the planned review of SG's sexual harassment policies. I think this is a hugely welcome development, particularly as the outpouring of responses to allegations at Westminster, Holyrood and beyond have made clear how worryingly common harassment in the workplace is. It's work I'd be keen to support, and I hope that many colleagues across SG will want

to be involved and help make it as successful as possible.

I would like to raise one concern with you, though: namely that staff who have concerns about behaviours and cultures have been asked to direct those to HR. As you will of course know, current procedures already advise staff to report harassment or unacceptable behaviour to HR. For a review to be meaningful - and for any new policy to be effective - it will need to capture as far as possible the perspectives of people who have felt unable to report their experiences to HR, whether because of the nature of those experiences or due to worries about the consequences of reporting an incident. As an organisation we have already failed in our duty of care to staff in this situation, and the review has the potential to be a valuable opportunity to help us learn the lessons we need to take from that on how we can better support people. If we are serious about creating an environment in which anyone experiencing unacceptable behaviour feels able to speak up and has the confidence that their complaint will be handled appropriately, we need to make sure we're hearing their voices in the first place, and to achieve that we need to give people a confidential and confidence-inspiring channel.

I appreciate that this work will be in the very early stages, and it may of course be that something along these lines is already envisaged. I just wanted to highlight it, as it would be a great shame – and a disservice to staff who have faced harassment within SG – if we didn't make the most of the opportunity to understand the extent of the problem and where the stumbling blocks have been to addressing it.

[REDACTED - MS A]

[REDACTED - MS A] | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]