

# Sexual Harassment Complaints Procedure

The Co-operative Party believes that our co-operative values should be reflected in our actions as well as our policies. We want all members to feel safe, welcome and respected in our Party.

The Co-operative Party takes seriously all complaints of harassment and discrimination and will not tolerate such behaviour by our members or at our events or meetings.

All complaints of inappropriate behaviour by members of the Co-operative Party including elected representatives are considered under our Membership Rules, which make it clear that members must not engage in conduct that discriminates against groups or individuals on the basis of a range of characteristics including sex. Sexual harassment is defined as a form of discrimination on the basis of sex.

## **What is sexual harassment?**

Sexual harassment is action of a sexual nature which is not welcomed by the person suffering it. It can include, but is not limited to:

- a) Unwanted physical contact
- b) Sexual teasing or suggestive remarks
- c) Sexual assault
- d) Requests for sexual favours
- e) Sexist jokes
- f) Display of explicit or indecent images

Any member of the Co-operative Party who wishes to make a complaint about sexual harassment by another member of the Party can do so by using the complaints portal or by contacting the Party's Assistant General Secretary (Membership and Organisation). This is Emma Hoddinott and her email address is [safeguarding@party.coop](mailto:safeguarding@party.coop) or alternatively the complaints portal can be accessed [here](#).

An independent specialist helpline is available for any person who has any questions about the Co-op Party's sexual harassment procedure, or who wishes to report a complaint of sexual harassment and receive support around the impact of the process support. This is available at any stage for those who have made or are considering making a complaint.



Where a complainant wishes to proceed with a formal complaint under the Party's rules an investigation will be conducted by an Independent Specialist Investigator. The investigator will prepare a report for the NEC Disputes Sub Committee which anonymises the information, summarises the evidence and provides a recommendation for action.

Decisions by NEC disputes will be reported to the full NEC including whether the recommendation of the Independent investigator is followed. If it is not followed, a detailed written decision explaining the reasons why must be provided.

The members concerned shall have the right of appeal to the CPDC only where new evidence has been made available, the sanction is demonstrably disproportionate or there are demonstrable failings in the investigation.

If a complaint has also been made to the Labour Party, the Independent investigation will be conducted as one investigation and report the findings to both parties to avoid duplication and ensure complainants are not having to go through multiple processes. A single recommendation will then be provided to both Parties.

Where we believe a criminal offence may have taken place, the complainant will be encouraged to report the incident to the Police; and the Party will provide appropriate on-going support in this process.

All complaints will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. Any complaint will be dealt with confidentially, information will be shared with the Independent Investigator so that they can make contact directly with the complainant. Information on complaints is stored in a protected area with restricted access. Local Parties and representatives are not involved in the investigation. At the NEC disputes decision, all details are redacted. If the complaint was to proceed to the point of appeal, a complainant would need to provide permission for their identity to be shared ahead of any hearing and for evidence to be provided unredacted to the respondent.

The Co-op Party does not provide information to third parties except where it is required to by law. The Party may disclose information to comply with its safeguarding obligations.

The procedures followed by the Disciplinary Committee are set out in in the Disciplinary Procedure.

At no point will the complainant be required to confront the respondent face to face.

The National Executive Committee will receive regular reports on the number of complaints being made of sexual harassment, and on the sanctions.