

| Harassment



www.galop.org.uk

Harassment

This fact sheet provides advice if you have been stopped or arrested by the police. If you have been warned, cautioned or given a penalty notice by the police, you should read our factsheet 'Police Warnings, Cautions, and Fines'. If you are a lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans person, you can contact Galop if you require more information about any of the issues raised in this factsheet.

What is harassment?

The term harassment can mean different things, and can take place in different settings, including your home, your place of work, your school or via the phone or the internet. The person carrying out the harassment might be a neighbour or groups of people living nearby, an ex-partner, family members or someone at work or school.

If you are experiencing any of the following, particularly from the same person on more than one occasion, this is an indication that you may be experiencing harassment:

- verbal abuse or threats, including blackmail
- violence, including threatening behaviour, pushing and shoving or actual physical harm
- sexual harassment, including verbal remarks or unwanted physical contact
- damage to your property or possessions
- information spread maliciously in a way that is calculated to cause distress, for example 'outing' you to your family or neighbours or telling lies about you.

There are also other, more subtle, forms of harassment. These can include things such as unwanted attention, being followed or persistent sending of letters or unwanted gifts.

For more information on various types of hate crime, see the Galop factsheet: What is a Hate Crime?

I'm being harassed by my neighbours

One of the most common forms of harassment experienced by LGBT people is from neighbours or people living nearby. Sometimes those doing the harassment specifically target

What can I do about neighbourhood harassment?

If you are being harassed by your neighbours or other people who live near you, you can take the following action:

- Try to deal with the harassment as soon as it starts. The longer it goes on the more difficult it can be to address. If you feel in immediate danger always dial 999.
- Tell someone about the harassment. You should make a formal report of any incident of harassment as soon as it happens so that you can get help and stop an escalation of the abuse:
 - If you live in council or housing association accommodation you should contact your local housing office
 - Whoever your landlord is, you can go to the local authority's antisocial behaviour team, which may be able to take action on your behalf
 - If you decide to go to the police you could ask to speak to the LGBT Liaison Officer for your borough as they may have a better and more sympathetic understanding of the particular issues you are facing as an LGBT person.

- You can also contact Galop and we can advise you of your rights in your particular situation and suggest an appropriate course of action, as well as putting you in touch with other agencies or support networks that may be able to help. If you feel that your complaint hasn't been dealt with properly by the police, Galop will liaise on your behalf with them to try and resolve the situation.
- Keep a diary of any incident, however minor, noting down dates, times and what was said or done by the person harassing you.
- Keep a record of any evidence of harassment - for example take photos of any graffiti, keep evidence of any damage to property. Save text messages, emails or letters. Find out if there are any CCTV images that might have captured the harassment.
- Find out if anyone else witnessed the harassment and ask them if they are prepared to come forward as a witness should you need to report the matter.
- Sometimes speaking to your harasser can help but never consider doing this if you think it could put you in danger. If you do decide to do this, speak slowly and calmly, maintaining eye contact and explain the way that the harassment has been affecting you.
- Keep a record of the harassment, such as times, dates, location and what was said or done to you.
- Ask to speak confidentially about the harassment to a senior manager or someone working in personnel. Ask to make a formal report of any incidents and keep a record of such meetings, such as dates, and written records. You can ask a sympathetic friend, colleague or union member to be present with you at any meeting.
- If you're a member, contact your trade union and ask them for help. If you don't feel comfortable approaching your workplace representative, then go directly to the union's regional or head office, or to the LGBT section of the Union.
- If the harassment is of a criminal nature, such as threats, blackmail, violence or damage to your property, then you should consider contacting the police.
- Contact Galop we may be able to put you in contact with organisations that provide help and advice on employment discrimination issues, or put you in contact

I'm being harassed at work

It is against the law to harass someone at work because of their sexuality or gender identity. The person who is harassing you may be in breach of employment law or in some circumstances may be in breach of criminal law.

If an employer or colleague is harassing you, you should:

What can be done about the harassment?

Different types of harassment are covered by different laws. The action of your harasser may be covered by:

- Housing law (if it's your neighbour or landlord)
- Employment law (if it's your employer or colleague)
- Antisocial behaviour law
- Criminal law

Because harassment can sometimes be hard to define or prove, as it can be made up of lots of

seemingly simple acts, the law also specifically defines harassment as any incident that occurred on at least two occasions. The harassment must cause (or be intended to cause) alarm or distress to the victim. It is a criminal offence to harass someone in this way and the police can take action against the person who is doing it. Tenants and leaseholders who harass their neighbours are also likely to be breaking their tenancy or leasehold agreement and the local authority, housing association or private landlord are obliged to take action against them. Ultimately this could lead to one or more of the following outcomes for the harasser:

- Warning letters and interviews
- Acceptable behaviour agreements and parenting contracts
- Parenting orders, individual support orders, noise abatement notices and anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)
- Obtaining an injunction against the perpetrator which prevents them from continuing to harass the victim
- Proceedings against a tenant or leaseholder including possible eviction
- Criminal charges against the person harassing you, such as fines, arrest and convictions

Useful contact numbers

Galop: 020 7704 2040
www.galop.org.uk

Stonewall Housing: 020 7359 5767
www.stonewallhousing.org.uk

Pink Law (Free legal advice for the LGBT community): 020 7882 3668

Always dial 999 if it is an emergency and you think you are in immediate danger.