

Hate crime at work

If you think a hate crime has happened at work it's important to understand your rights and responsibilities.

If you need advice on other types of crime at work, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).

What hate crime is

In England, Scotland and Wales, any criminal offence can be a hate crime if someone is targeted because of:

- disability
- race
- religion
- sexual orientation
- being transgender

In Scotland, hate crime law also covers age.

For example, hate crimes could include:

- physical violence
- sexual assault
- verbal abuse, for example racist or homophobic abuse
- threats of violence
- online abuse
- damage to someone's property
- inciting or stirring up hatred

It can still be a hate crime if there is a mistake about someone's identity. For example, attacking someone because they're thought to be gay, even if they're not.

In England and Wales the laws that cover hate crime are the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and section 66 of the Sentencing Act 2020.

In Scotland the law is the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021.

Reporting it to the police

If you think you've been the victim of a hate crime at work, you should seriously consider reporting it to the police.

However, nobody can force you to report it. It's your choice.

To contact the police:

- call 999 in an emergency
- call 101 if it's not an emergency

- [report a hate crime online – England and Wales](#)
- [report a hate crime online – Scotland](#)

If you want to report the crime but you do not want to talk to the police, there are organisations who will report it to the police for you. These are called third party reporting centres.

[Find out more about reporting a hate crime from Citizens Advice](#)

What an employer should do

If you're the employer or manager of someone who's been the victim of a hate crime, you should:

- talk with them about whether they want to tell the police
- encourage them to report it, without putting any pressure on them
- support them if they choose to report it

If someone decides not to report a crime to the police, you should respect their decision and be sensitive to their concerns.

However, as an employer you might feel you need to tell the police in some circumstances. For example if there is an ongoing risk to the safety of your employee or other people.

If you are going to tell the police, you should:

- talk with your employee about it first
- let your employee know once you've reported it to the police

If you're not sure what to do, you could:

- get specialist advice and support
- consider [getting legal advice](#)

Making and handling a complaint at work

Someone who's reported a hate crime to the police might also make a discrimination or harassment complaint at work.

This complaint should usually be handled in the same way as any other discrimination complaint.

Find out more about:

- [what to do if you've experienced discrimination at work](#)
- [handling a discrimination complaint](#)

Occasionally an employer may have to wait for the criminal process to finish before they can:

- investigate the complaint
- carry out a workplace [disciplinary procedure](#)

Employers should:

- check with the police before doing either of those things
- consider getting legal advice, to make sure there's no risk of prejudicing the criminal process
- give information to the police if they ask for it

If there's no criminal conviction

If an employer waits for a criminal process to end and there is no conviction, it may still be possible to take disciplinary action.

This is because the level of evidence needed to prove a crime is higher than the level of evidence needed for an employer's disciplinary procedure.

Get specialist advice and support

For specialist hate crime advice and support, you can contact:

- [Stop Hate UK](#)
- [SupportLine](#)
- [True Vision](#)

For any other questions, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).

If you're struggling to cope and need someone to talk to, you can contact:

- an employee assistance programme (EAP) if your employer has one
- [Samaritans](#)
- [Victim Support](#) – in England and Wales
- [Victim Support Scotland](#)

Find out more about:

- [hate crime in England and Wales from the Crown Prosecution Service \(CPS\)](#)
- [hate crime law in Scotland on the Scottish Government website](#)