

23 May 2024

Calls for increased action on sexual harassment

Motion A102 demanded increased action on sexual discrimination, harassment and assault by eliminating toxic workplace cultures.

In November 2023, 60 female civil servants who had suffered sexual harassment wrote to the MOD permanent secretary after years of their complaints being ignored.

Abe from DSG South Central proposed the motion, saying: “These brave women reported sexual incidents assaults to the managers at the time but no action was taken. There’s a pervasive culture that tolerates and perpetuates such behaviours. It is unacceptable and must be eradicated.”

The motion was seconded by Peter from DfE North West and North Wales who hoped that, while what happened was appalling, this motion can help ensure it never happens again.

Tim from Government Legal added: “Bullying, harassment and discrimination are the lived experience of too many of our members and happens on a daily basis. The problems we have on this front have never been worse. The power imbalance is the reason people don’t want to come forward.”

Discrimination and harassment

On behalf of the NEC, Ginette Gantschuk commended the motion. She lamented that Last year’s PCS People Survey revealed that members in the MOD have the third highest rates of discrimination and harassment under protected characteristics of any employer and added that PCS called for an independent investigation at the time the letter was sent to the permanent secretary. She also commended PCS’ sexual harassment training and the Equalities team’s recent sexual harassment conference.

Conference instructed NEC to audit bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation policies and across all employers, demand from the Cabinet Office a

meaningful route of escalation of such matters to a national forum where trade unions are present, to work with groups and branches to launch a major publicity campaign, and continue to support PCS reps to forcibly tackle sexual discrimination, harassment and assault.

The motion was carried without contest.