

## Sexual harassment complaints must be investigated properly

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With the wide media coverage of sexual harassment in workplaces from Hollywood to Westminster, employers should be ready for complaints closer to home, says employment lawyer Helen Ruelle.

Helen, an Advocate in Ogier's top-ranked Jersey employment law team, said that it was possible that the coverage of sexual harassment cases would encourage people to raise incidents with their employers, and that employers should be ready to deal with them.

Coverage of complaints against Hollywood movie producer Harvey Weinstein have been followed by allegations against several politicians in the House of Commons, and the issue has been widely discussed and highlighted on social media.

Helen said that where complaints are made about sexual harassment, they should be investigated in the same way as any other workplace complaint.

She said: "The imperative thing is that employers take complaints seriously, and have a robust investigation of any complaints made.

"Complaints should be investigated fairly, properly and appropriately - without undermining the complainant or scapegoating the subject of the complaint.

"The law imposes an eight-week window in respect of one-off sexual harassment incidents - but where repeated incidents amount to a 'course of conduct' that window falls away.

"Employers and HR teams should also be prepared for when a complaint crosses the line between a matter to be resolved in the workplace, and a matter that should be dealt with by the police.

"Where a complaint appears to fall into the realms of criminal conduct, you should support an employee if they decide to take the matter to the police."

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