I was racially and sexually harassed and physically and sexually assaulted at my place of work from the very beginning, in actual fact, from the second day I was there. A fridge door was slammed into my leg, my injured arm purposely knocked and squeezed.

My breasts were often touched as one particular chef walked passed me, saying the kitchen is too small, he would grab and hug me even though I did not know him as I had only been at my place of work for the second day. He put his arm around me and squeezed my breast. I was asked by this Chef to get an item from a top shelf. As I turned to get it, he pushed his clothed Penis into my behind. He was aroused. When I dropped the items in shock, he turned and smirked. I was relentlessly bullied at my place of work which is a [restaurant]. Women not only find it very difficult to find success and find work as Chefs in restaurants but this behaviour is rife in kitchen environments across the UK. There is a shortage of chefs in the UK. Many Chefs, particularly in [restaurants] are not UK born and come from other [Countries]. Many of these chefs do not understand the Equal Opportunity Policies and laws of the UK and the concept of Boundaries. Women in those Countries are often regarded as second class citizens, often not human at all and therefore not worthy of any respect.

I believe that the problems of Alcohol/Drug abuse because of such behaviour also exists on a large scale (after being Assaulted, I suffered Post Traumatic Stress flash backs, I have Agoraphobia, Depression and anxiety issues because of what happened which can be medically proven so started drinking Alcohol as a coping mechanism).

My Employers did not investigate and chose instead to cover the situation for the sake of the business so protected the other chefs and made the situation worse for me and made me leave my place of work and change my job role so many times, I ended up resigning 3 months later.

The Police could not be bothered to investigate because it is not considered a serious crime and evidence and witnesses in particular are required which there often is not. In a boys club such as a working kitchen, the men often gather around to protect each other and with the support of employers covering them and their vile behaviour, it is so very easy to call the woman a liar. This is what happened to me. Sexual Harassment needs to be taken much more seriously. Women have had to put up and shut up with this behaviour for far too long. Things need to change particularly in my industry but also in places of work across the U.K.

I have a lot of evidence which said this actually did happen, emails, Work WhatsApp Messages, photographic reports, chefs later admitting things did happen, Employers constantly changing their stories. I had to make a formal complaint to the Police Complaints Commission and months later still have not heard back. I also now will pay a lot of money in fees to take my former Employers to a Tribunal. This is very terrifying, at a time when I am already scared and unwell because of what happened to me. Not only that but I feel this is my only chance and hope of possibly getting any justice and it is incredibly expensive for me. I am not able to work because I was became ill because of what happened and I now have to pay thousands in Court Fees.

Speaking of the way I felt, I was absolutely humiliated, I felt deep shame and was treated horrifically by my own colleagues and employers. I was the only woman Chef in my place of work and when it
came to the crunch, the boys’ club rallied around for each other. Who was I supposed to go to for help? No one cared and no one listened. I was alone.

Laws on sexual harassment need to be so much tougher and it should be easier to access help. The Police need to take allegations more seriously opposed to just sweeping them under the carpet and take the time and effort to look at all the evidence. It is hard enough to talk about what happened. Women are often purposely shamed and embarrassed anyway and then Employers and the culprits often further humiliate and undermine the victim so that they are scared and ashamed to talk...Who will believe them anyway, especially when they are alone?!

Employers need to be held accountable with serious consequences where whistle blowing and Allegations are made and where the Employers themselves cover them up. Independent Government Bodies should be responsible for overlooking Grievances, especially where the person has not been allowed to raise a Grievance whilst employed, without fear they will lose their job. I speak from my experiences. My place of work hired and paid a legal Agency who was obviously very biased in their questioning for my Employers. This is despite [job title], including the [job title] admitting things happened. They blanket denied everything.

My world has been turned upside down. I would never wish for another person to ever go through what I have.

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