**Guidance on Implementing the Sexual Harassment Prevention Risk Assessment**

**1. Customisation for Your Organisation**

* **Company-Specific Details**: Begin by customising the document to reflect your organisation’s specific details. This includes filling in the business name, the number of employees, and the specific location(s) where your organisation operates. For remote-first businesses like PreciseHR, make sure the risk assessment addresses both virtual work environments and in-person client interactions.
* **Assessor Information**: Ensure that the name of the person responsible for conducting the assessment is included. Assign this role to someone with a clear understanding of both workplace dynamics and legal obligations related to sexual harassment prevention.

**2. Identifying Internal and External Risk Factors**

* **Internal Risk Factors**: Use the risk identification section to pinpoint the unique internal risks your organisation faces. For example, in a remote working environment, there may be a risk of online harassment or inappropriate digital communication through chat platforms or emails. Additionally, power dynamics between senior and junior staff can discourage reporting, so focus on how to mitigate these risks.
* **External Risk Factors (Third Parties)**: Consider interactions with clients, contractors, or third-party vendors. For businesses that involve off-site work, like client visits, there is a risk of harassment from external parties. Identify how employees can protect themselves in these situations and what steps should be taken if harassment occurs.

**3. Assessing the Risks**

* **Likelihood and Impact Ratings**: Each identified risk is rated based on its likelihood (high, medium, low) and its potential impact. Use this method to prioritise which risks need immediate action. For example, if the risk of online harassment is rated "low likelihood but high impact," you’ll still need a strong mitigation plan to address potential online misconduct.
* **Tailored Risk Assessment**: If your business operates in specific environments (e.g., visiting high-risk client sites), adjust the assessment to include risks unique to these settings. The more accurate and detailed your assessment, the more effective your mitigation strategies will be.

**4. Mitigating the Risks**

* **Internal Risk Mitigation Measures**:
  + **Sexual Harassment Policy**: Ensure that all employees are aware of your organisation’s clear and comprehensive sexual harassment policy. This should outline prohibited behaviours and provide a step-by-step reporting process. Make the policy easily accessible in the employee handbook and regularly communicate its importance.
  + **Training and Awareness**: Conduct mandatory training sessions that focus on recognising, reporting, and preventing harassment. Training should be part of onboarding for new employees and reinforced through periodic refresher sessions. For remote teams, include modules on cyber safety and respectful online communication.
  + **Supportive Culture**: Foster an environment where employees feel comfortable raising concerns without fear of retaliation. This could include regular pulse surveys or anonymous feedback opportunities that allow employees to voice concerns about workplace culture. Ensure employees know they can report issues confidentially.
* **External Risk Mitigation Measures**:
  + **Client and Contractor Communication**: Communicate your organisation’s zero-tolerance stance on sexual harassment to all external parties. Include clauses in contracts and agreements with clients and contractors that set expectations for respectful behaviour. Post visible notices in any shared workspaces or client sites that reinforce these standards.
  + **Pre-Visit Briefings**: Before employees attend off-site visits, provide clear guidelines on what they should do if they experience or witness harassment from third parties. These briefings should also cover escalation procedures and the support available for affected employees.
  + **Incident Reporting and Support**: Establish a clear reporting mechanism for employees who experience third-party harassment. Ensure these incidents are documented and followed up promptly. Offer support services, such as counselling or adjustments to working conditions, for employees impacted by harassment.

**5. Monitoring and Reviewing the Risk Assessment**

* **Quarterly Reviews**: Set a schedule for regularly reviewing and updating the risk assessment. This should be done at least quarterly to ensure that any new risks are identified and addressed. For example, if your company expands into new markets or starts working with new clients, reassess the external risks associated with these changes.
* **Incident Monitoring**: Log all incidents of harassment and track the effectiveness of your mitigation strategies. This data will help you identify patterns, refine the assessment, and improve future prevention measures. Regularly evaluate how well the reporting process works and whether employees feel comfortable using it.

**6. Implementing and Communicating Preventative Measures**

* **Policy Communication**: Ensure all employees are aware of the sexual harassment policy. Share this policy during onboarding, and make it available via internal platforms like the company intranet. For external stakeholders (clients, contractors, etc.), include the policy in formal contracts and make expectations clear from the outset.
* **Visible Commitment**: Visibly demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to preventing sexual harassment. This can include posting signs in workspaces, conducting annual harassment prevention campaigns, and making sure that leadership publicly reinforces these values.
* **Cultural Shifts**: Encourage a workplace culture that values respect and inclusivity. Regularly collect feedback from employees on the work environment and adjust strategies to create a more open, respectful culture. Leadership should model appropriate behaviour and encourage team members to speak up if they witness harassment.

**7. Supporting Affected Employees**

* **Immediate Support**: Make support services available for employees who report harassment or feel unsafe. This may include counselling, adjustments to their work environment, or temporary changes to reporting lines.
* **Confidentiality**: Protect the confidentiality of individuals who report harassment. Ensure that only those directly involved in the investigation or resolution process have access to sensitive information.

**8. Conclusion and Long-Term Strategy**

* **Proactive Compliance with the New Duty**: By completing and regularly updating this risk assessment, your organisation is taking the necessary steps to comply with the new anticipatory duty that comes into effect in October 2024. Staying proactive in identifying and mitigating risks will help you maintain a safe and respectful work environment.
* **Continuous Improvement**: Remember that preventing harassment requires ongoing commitment. Regularly refine your policies and processes based on employee feedback, new risks, and best practices. Encourage leadership to remain engaged and visible in promoting a harassment-free workplace.

This detailed guidance helps ensure that your organisation is prepared to address and prevent sexual harassment effectively through proactive risk assessment and mitigation.