**Guidance on Implementing the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy and Procedure**

**1. Customisation for Your Organisation**

* **Adapt to Your Organisation’s Structure**: Start by replacing placeholder terms such as “[Company Name]” with your company’s official name. Ensure that the reporting mechanisms and investigative procedures outlined in the document align with your company’s current processes and available resources.
* **Clarify Reporting Channels**: Specify who will handle sexual harassment reports—this could be HR, the CEO, or a designated senior leader. If your company doesn’t have a dedicated HR team, you may need to assign these responsibilities to an external HR company or senior manager.
* **Include Contact Information**: Add specific details for employees to report harassment, such as email addresses, phone numbers, and a link to your anonymous reporting system (if applicable).

**2. Communicating the Policy to Employees and Third Parties**

* **Handbook Integration**: Add this policy to your employee handbook and distribute it to all staff, ensuring it is easily accessible. Digital copies can be shared through your company’s intranet or as part of a welcome pack for new employees. Also, print versions may be distributed if needed, particularly in workplaces without easy digital access.
* **Clear Communication with Contractors and Clients**: Since the policy extends to third parties such as contractors, freelancers, and clients, you must ensure that they are informed of your zero-tolerance stance on sexual harassment. Include this policy in contractual agreements, and post it visibly on client or contractor sites if applicable. Communicating expectations upfront can help avoid misunderstandings.
* **Induction and Onboarding**: Introduce the policy during employee induction sessions to ensure new hires understand the company's commitment to a harassment-free workplace from day one. Reinforce these messages with periodic reminders, such as quarterly newsletters or staff meetings.

**3. Training and Awareness**

* **Mandatory Training**: Implement mandatory training sessions for all employees, focusing on recognising inappropriate behaviour, understanding the reporting procedures, and promoting a respectful workplace culture. These sessions should be conducted at least annually and tracked to ensure all employees participate.
* **Manager Training**: Provide additional, tailored training for managers and supervisors. Their role is crucial in maintaining a respectful environment, handling complaints sensitively, and managing investigations fairly. Make sure they are fully equipped to act promptly and appropriately when a report is made.
* **Refresher Courses and Follow-Up**: Schedule regular refresher courses to keep the policy top-of-mind. Training should cover any updates to legal requirements, such as the new duty to prevent sexual harassment that comes into force in October 2024. Include real-life scenarios and role-playing exercises to increase engagement and understanding.

**4. Establishing and Enhancing Reporting Procedures**

* **Multiple Reporting Channels**: Ensure that employees have multiple, accessible channels to report incidents of sexual harassment. Reports can be made in person, by email, or through confidential reporting systems like an online platform or hotline. The policy should explicitly state that these reports will be treated with strict confidentiality.
* **Confidentiality and Support**: Emphasise that all reports of sexual harassment will be handled with utmost confidentiality, with information shared only with those necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint. In your communication, provide reassurance that no one will face retaliation for reporting harassment.
* **Record Keeping**: Maintain detailed records of all reports, investigations, and outcomes to track recurring issues, demonstrate compliance, and identify areas where your processes may need improvement.

**5. Investigation and Resolution Process**

* **Impartial Investigations**: Assign an impartial investigator, typically from HR, to handle sexual harassment claims. If the claim involves a senior leader, consider hiring an external investigator to ensure impartiality and objectivity. Investigations should be conducted thoroughly and completed within a reasonable timeframe, ideally 14 days, unless more time is needed due to complexity.
* **Step-by-Step Investigations**: Investigators should follow a consistent, step-by-step process, including collecting statements, reviewing evidence (e.g., emails, messages), and speaking to witnesses. Ensure that both the complainant and the accused understand the process and are kept informed at each stage.
* **Outcomes and Disciplinary Action**: After the investigation, document the findings in a clear report. Decide on appropriate actions based on the evidence. Disciplinary actions could range from retraining or written warnings to suspension or dismissal, depending on the severity of the harassment. Mediation may be considered only if both parties agree and if the situation is deemed suitable for this approach.
* **Appeals Process**: Employees should have the right to appeal the outcome. Ensure that appeals are submitted in writing to the CEO or an independent party within a set timeframe (e.g., 7 days), and that the appeal is reviewed impartially.

**6. Proactive Risk Assessment and Prevention**

* **Conduct Regular Risk Assessments**: Carry out regular risk assessments to identify areas within your organisation where sexual harassment risks may be heightened. For example, isolated workspaces or environments with power imbalances may pose higher risks. Regularly review these assessments and take steps to mitigate risks, such as improving supervision or adjusting workflows.
* **Creating a Culture of Respect**: Foster a positive workplace culture where respect, professionalism, and inclusivity are at the forefront. Encourage employees to provide anonymous feedback through surveys, which can be used to assess the overall workplace environment. Address concerns raised and take steps to improve workplace culture where necessary.
* **Contractor and Client Expectations**: Proactively communicate your harassment prevention policy to all contractors, clients, and third parties. Make it clear that respectful behaviour is expected, and outline potential consequences (e.g., contract termination) for those who violate the policy.

**7. Supporting Affected Employees**

* **Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)**: Offer confidential counselling and support services through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) like [Hive to Thrive](https://hivetothrive.co.uk/employee-assistance) or other mental health resources for employees affected by sexual harassment. Make sure employees know how to access these services.
* **Adjustments to Working Conditions**: Depending on the severity of the incident, offer temporary or permanent adjustments to working conditions, such as changes to workstations or reporting lines, to support the complainant during and after the investigation.

**8. Regular Monitoring and Review**

* **Annual Policy Reviews**: Ensure that this policy is reviewed and updated annually, or sooner if required by changes in the law, to keep it aligned with best practices and legal obligations. Analyse any reports or complaints of sexual harassment to identify patterns and make improvements where necessary.
* **Feedback Loops**: Encourage open feedback from employees about the policy’s effectiveness and areas for improvement. Incorporate this feedback into policy reviews and make adjustments as needed to ensure that the procedures remain effective and respected.

By following this guidance, you can ensure that your **Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy and Procedure** is not only implemented correctly but also maintained as an integral part of your workplace culture. This will help protect your organisation and employees from the serious effects of harassment and foster a safer, more respectful working environment.

For any further assistance, the PreciseHR team is available to provide tailored support and advice.