

Preventing sexual harassment at work: checklist and action plan for employers



Introduction

All employers have a duty of care to protect their workers. Policies and procedures alone are not enough to stop sexual harassment from happening in your workplace. Not taking reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment can have a significant effect on the reputation of your business and the wellbeing and safety of your employees.

Your organisation can be held legally responsible for sexual harassment if you do not take preventative steps. If you need professional legal advice, please contact a lawyer.

Sexual harassment is anything of a sexual nature that violates someone's dignity or makes them feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated, offended or like they are in a hostile environment. For example, inappropriate comments, touching and jokes. Sexual harassment can take place in person or in other ways, such as through social media, messaging tools or email.

These templates aim to complement your existing HR policies and help you to take action to protect your organisation and your workers. They include:



A checklist: this is designed to support you through every stage of a shift and can be adapted to suit your workplace.



An action plan: this will help you outline what action you will take to use the checklist in your organisation.



Monitoring logs: these will help you monitor how the checklist and action plan are being used.



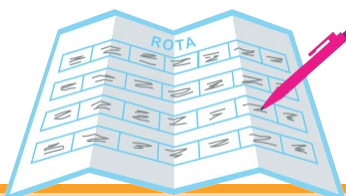
Checklist

This checklist was originally designed for the hospitality sector but it can be adapted to suit your workplace.

The checklist supports you through every stage, from rota design all the way through to the end of a shift, and provides three main areas to think about:



1. Communicating with staff: How to promote a culture of zero tolerance and let your staff know you take sexual harassment seriously.



2. Changing the working environment: Controlling the (physical and social) environment that people are working in to make it as safe as possible.



3. Working practices: Policies and procedures to make sure you know when sexual harassment happens and how it's dealt with.

How you can use the checklist

When adapting this checklist for your own workplace, consider how you work and the people who will be using it. Think through the following questions:

- 1) Are team managers or supervisors the right people to use it?
- 2) How easy would it be for your team managers or supervisors to use it?
- 3) How can you support staff to use it?
- 4) Do you need to adapt this tool for your workplace?
- 5) Who do you need to speak to so that the checklist is used across your organisation?

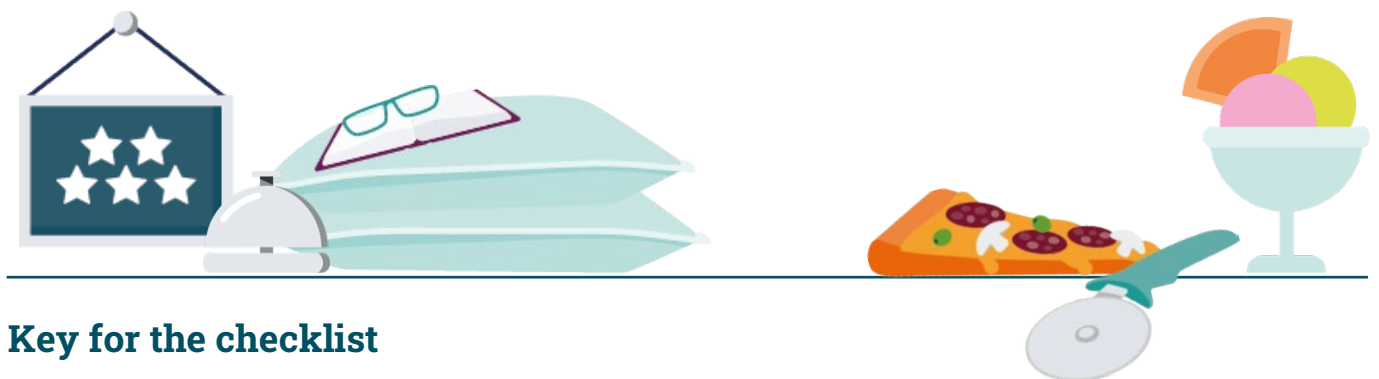
You should also lay the groundwork to enable the tool to be used effectively. For example, by running awareness campaigns, updating policies and procedures, delivering training and getting the right people involved and on board.

How other organisations have used it

Other hospitality organisations have been involved in testing and developing the checklist and thinking about how it would work in their organisations.

They have used this tool as a starter to:

- Have conversations with the relevant staff or senior leadership about how it might be used in practice, to agree where to start taking action.
- Review current workplace policies and practice to see if there is a specific area where they might want to focus action on preventing sexual harassment.
- Have conversations with staff to understand what steps they think can be taken to prevent sexual harassment and where they think they can improve their practice as an organisation.
- Use a risk assessment-based approach to preventing sexual harassment, using the checklist in staff wellbeing and security measures that managers have to review and take action against, monitored centrally by area managers.



Key for the checklist

Use these icons to know when you should use certain sections of the checklist. Suggested actions for each stage of the shift are included in bold.

 Communicating with staff  Changing the working environment  Working practices



Before a shift



Start of a shift



End of shift

Checklist and suggested actions



Changing the working environment

Staff who hold a lot of control over the hours of more junior staff, or how incentives are distributed (such as opportunities to get tips etc.), might be able to use this power in a way that can include the opportunity for sexual harassment to happen.

☐ Have you made sure that people who have control over staff hours and incentives don't abuse this power?

☐ Have you made sure initiatives are in place so that you can check there are no abuses of power?

Ask your manager or HR team to reiterate that your organisation has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment regularly during manager meetings or briefings.

If resourcing allows, make sure more than one person is deciding the rota or opportunities for staff.

Where resourcing allows, make sure that nobody is exposed to risks such as working alone.

Make sure that staff have more than one trusted person they can go to, besides their line manager, if they have an issue.

Make sure staff are aware of relevant policies such as policies on staff relationships.

☐ Have you made sure staff are working in the safest situation possible?

Survey or ask staff if they ever feel vulnerable or in dangerous situations at work and see if you can do anything to change that, such as making sure people aren't working alone. Pay attention to staff who may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment, such as younger staff, or those who don't speak English as a first language who might be less likely to report if something does happen.

Look at where you can change the environment (such as lighting and working patterns) to make working situations safer for staff.

Think about your back of house and staff room spaces, as well as front of house.

☐ Have you made sure that there are clear ways for staff to report sexual harassment and that they know who they can go to on their shift?

☐ Have you made sure there is more than one person that everyone can report to?

Use the rota to show which team members are responsible for dealing with any incidences of sexual harassment (more than one person if possible). Make sure that those responsible staff know what to do if someone comes to them with an incident and have a set policy or process for responding.

Provide the opportunity for staff to report anonymously, in case they don't feel confident to come forward. If you do not have an anonymous reporting line, consider using an external whistleblowing service provider.

Have a set policy or process for what to do if a customer or client harasses a member of staff (such as warning systems, removing them from the venue, or permanently banning them) that all staff are aware of.

Give staff training and advice for intervening safely if they see sexual harassment happening.

☐ Do you know what to do if staff (including agency staff) come to you with an incident?

Make sure there are written agreements with agencies that explain what to do if their staff are sexually harassed, speaking to your HR or hiring team if you need to.

Speak to agency staff before and after a shift to make sure that they know how to report any incidents, where to go and who to speak to.



Communicating with staff



- ☐ Have you reminded staff about your sexual harassment policies and made sure they know what sexual harassment is?

Use a brief before a shift to remind staff about sexual harassment policies, what counts as sexual harassment, and that sexual harassment will not be tolerated from staff or customers.

Sexual harassment is anything of a sexual nature that violates their dignity or makes them feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated, offended or like they are in a hostile environment. For example, inappropriate comments, touching and jokes. Sexual harassment can take place in person or in other ways, such as through social media, messaging tools or email.

Put posters or notices where customers or clients can see them to make sure that they know your organisation will not tolerate sexual harassment.

- ☐ Have you reiterated that you will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment and that leaders, managers or responsible people should be informed if an incident happens?

Use the brief to ask staff who are responsible for handling complaints to step forward and make sure everyone is aware of who they are, where they will be and that complaints will be taken seriously.

Ask staff at the beginning of the shift if they have any concerns and act on them, if possible.



Changing the working environment



- ☐ Have you changed the environment to stop sexual harassment from happening (lighting, secluded corners, back of house, etc.)?

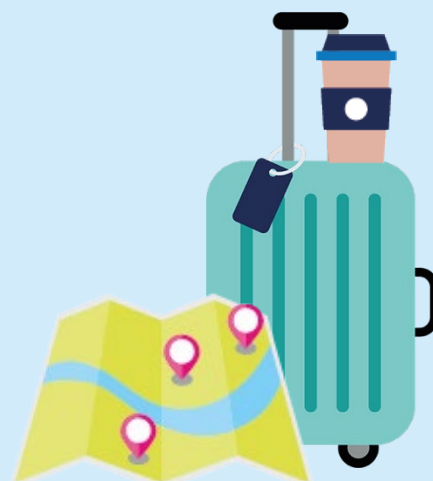
Look at your bookings and make sure you plan for any possible opportunities where sexual harassment might happen – for example, if there is a large group, should staff go in twos to look after them.

Working practices

- ☐ Have you made sure that all staff know what they should do and who they should go to if they are sexually harassed?
- ☐ Have you made sure that everyone has understood, especially those who might not speak English as a first language?

Make sure that staff who are responsible for dealing with any reports or incidents of sexual harassment know what to do if someone comes to them with an incident.

Provide the opportunity for staff to report anonymously, in case they don't feel confident to come forward.





Communicating with staff

- ☐ Have you given staff the opportunity to raise any issues they have had, especially agency staff who may be likely not to return if they have been sexually harassed?

Reiterate your zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment before staff go home or finish their shift and provide a confidential way for them to report anything that has happened to them at work.

Raise any incidences (as long as this protects employees' right to privacy) so that all staff are aware of what has happened, and reiterate that your organisation has taken those issues seriously.

Changing the working environment

- ☐ Have you made staff aware that if sexual harassment happens, even after a shift or during a social event, they might still be legally responsible for legal action?

Remind staff that social activities and drinks are still associated with their workplace and that incidences will be taken seriously.

Working practices

- ☐ Have you reviewed if and where there have been incidences and thought about what you can do to stop them happening again in the future?

Highlight on your system any issues there have been with customers or clients and what action has been taken so that other staff members are aware.

Fill out the monitoring log provided in this toolkit.

Share any incidences of sexual harassment with your HR team. They can log them and identify any patterns, to see if there's anything that can be done to stop it from happening again.

Action plan

Record any actions you need to take to make this checklist part of your working practices. Useful things to include are:

- updating your sexual harassment policies and making staff aware of them
- making sure staff are fully trained and aware of what to do if sexual harassment happens
- recording who you need to speak to so that the checklist is used across your organisation
- supporting staff to use the checklist at the correct times

Enter your answers here...

Record any additional actions that you would like to add to the checklist that aren't yet included.

Enter your answers here...

Record any changes you are going to make to the checklist to make it relevant for your workplace.

Enter your answers here...

Monitoring logs

Complete the monitoring log after each shift to help monitor how the checklist is being used and any changes that may be needed to your approach.

Date: Enter date here...

Did you use the checklist before, during and after your shift? ☐ No ☐ Yes

If no, why?

Enter your answers here...

If yes, was it useful? Are there any changes or follow ups that need to be made?

Enter your answers here...

We suggest completing an in-depth log every quarter to help record the effect of your activity.

What action have you taken this quarter and what has been the outcome of this activity?

Enter your answers here...

Who have you involved and what has their reaction been?

Enter your answers here...

Have you faced any barriers?

Enter your answers here...

What have you learnt?

Enter your answers here...

Has the checklist changed how your organisation deals with sexual harassment?

Enter your answers here...

Actions to prioritise next quarter.

Enter your answers here...