

New service launches to help businesses address the risks and impact of sexual misconduct

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If your co-worker was accused of making inappropriate advances on a colleague in the office, what would you do? If a member of your team objected that sexual office 'banter' is making them feel uncomfortable, how would you resolve the issue? And if an ex-employee accused your organisation of 'hushing up' a historic incident of sexual misconduct, how would you handle the situation?

These are just a few of the questions that sexual violence prevention charity re:shape is asking this month as it launches its Sexual Misconduct & Harassment Response Service: a membership programme which supports organisations to effectively and ethically respond to the risk of sexual misconduct in the workplace.

Launching on September 27th, re:shape's Sexual Misconduct & Harassment Response Service is designed to help business leaders navigate their risk and responsibility in this area to create positive and safe working environments in organisations across a broad range of sectors, including retail, voluntary, local authority, broadcasting, and construction. The programme's aim is to protect employees, stakeholders, service users and customers from the risk of sexual harassment.

The service enables professional leaders to respond effectively to inappropriate workplace behaviour whilst also protecting their staff and organisation. The re:shape team will help organisations to understand their responsibilities and assess their risks; respond appropriately to historic, ongoing, or future allegations; foster a company culture of respect and autonomy; and put practices in place to encourage and build a transparent, safe working environment.

Membership gives organisations access to a specialist toolkit developed by re:shape in partnership with business, statutory and third-sector organisations. It works as a 'pick and mix' resource pack - organisations can choose the components most applicable to their needs.

The toolkit includes a confidential audit procedure to identify areas of risk, as well as an alternative self-reporting option; a sample sexual misconduct policy for firms to use as a basis for developing their own; a range of straightforward procedure and guidance resources; tools and assets to help managers open dialogues and change organisational culture; and additional tailored training and advice for teams and managers.

Re:shape CEO Tammy Banks says: "Organisations of all sizes are feeling the impact of allegations of sexual misconduct: more victims are speaking out, and our understanding of what constitutes misconduct is changing. A badly-handled sexual misconduct incidence can be the downfall of any organisation. Every case is unique, and misconduct must be handled sensitively to protect the individuals concerned and the business.

"Our Response Service will help give businesses a sensible, ethical framework for preventing and responding to allegations of sexual misconduct – something which is long overdue."

Numerous high profile regional and national organisations have already committed to becoming members of re:shape, including the British Film Institute, who are now recommending all Executive Directors consider re:shape membership, and UK construction and regeneration group Morgan Sindall who recognise the reputation of their industry and are committed to changing it.

North-Eastern social inclusion charity Humankind (formerly DISC) were one of the first organisations to take part in the initial pilot scheme for the service, and Director Anna Headley has only positive things to say about their experience with re:shape:

"Humankind have worked with re:shape for a number of years, and their excellent training has positively influenced both staff and customer welfare. As an organisation their ethos and values match our own, and like us they hold the welfare and safety of individuals to a high standard. We really value being associate members of re:shape and will continue to access support, guidance and development."

National retail business Richer Sounds is one of the first to sign up to the service. Director John Clayton] explains the firm's motivation for joining the scheme: "Colleague welfare is our top priority, and working

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with re:shape and having access to their expertise will certainly help us to educate our colleagues and ensure we are doing all we can in this particularly sensitive area.”

Tammy Banks adds, “We have designed this service to address a gap in professional know-how. Many organisations are concerned about and unsure of how to tackle sexual misconduct in the workplace, leading to scared and defensive responses if and when the issue arises. This service offers support and education to help businesses respond appropriately and ethically to this complex issue and helps them create a culture of understanding and respect.”

For more information about the new Sexual Misconduct & Harassment Response Service, visit <https://re-shape.org.uk/business>.

Re:shape's Sexual Misconduct & Harassment Response Service will officially launch on Thursday, September 27th. Organisations registered with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) are eligible for a ten per cent discount on the Service's basic rate.

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re:shape's Sexual Misconduct & Harassment Response Service leaflet

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