



Risk Assessment Manual

During this module you will be asked some questions to simply provoke thought and test your current knowledge please have a note pad or supervision workbook to hand to make notes. Your performance will only be measured on the answers you select when completing the knowledge test at the end of the module.

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Learning outcomes

- Understand the methods and objectives of risk assessment
- Define what is meant by ‘hazard’ and ‘risk’
- Describe how risk assessments can help address dilemmas between individuals’ rights and health and safety concerns
- Know how to carry out a basic risk assessment

Complementary manuals

- Health and Safety
- Infection Control
- Safety of People and Places
- Fire Safety

Chapter One

Acts for Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a required skill for all managers and employees. While your manager may be responsible for the formal assessments used to create safe working policies; you are responsible for the kind of informal assessments that enable you to do things safely.

There are a variety of Acts and regulations in place to protect workers and people who may be put at risk by working practice. Our modern health and safety legislation really began with:

The Health and Safety at Work (etc) Act (HSWA) 1974

The Health and Safety at Work Act was the first piece of legislation designed to cover **all** types of work and working environments. It is described as a framework, or skeleton, act because it gives general guidance on many issues, but further legislation was required to add detail and give specific responsibilities for controlling risks.

Under the Act your employer must:

- Provide you with written policies and procedures for safe working
- Ensure that the environment you work in and the equipment you use are safe and well maintained
- Handle substances safely
- Provide you with information, instruction, training and supervision
- Ensure that you have appropriate welfare facilities e.g. toilets and drinking water

You must:

- Use equipment and carry out tasks following your employer's safe working procedures and any training and information you have been given
- Work in a way that reasonably protects your health and safety and that of other people
- Co-operate with your employer on health and safety issues
- Report health and safety concerns to an appropriate person

The key to meeting the requirements of health and safety law is risk assessment; this helps you to identify hazards of work and to decide how best to control them. So, for example:

- in order to handle substances safely employers need to identify hazardous substances and ways of making them safer;
- to work in a way that reasonably protects your health and safety you must be able to recognise hazards and know how to reduce them

Most Health and Safety legislation is based on risk assessment; you should be aware of the Acts and regulations that affect your working practices and understand your responsibilities

which; broadly speaking, follow those of HSWA 1974 to cooperate with your employer and work safely.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

These regulations give specific responsibilities to employers, managers and supervisors for carrying out risk assessments and implementing appropriate control measures. The risk assessments must protect employees and **anyone who might be affected by work practices**; this could mean your clients or visitors to your premises.

Control measures should include:

- Appropriate communication of risks to employees
- Emergency procedures
- The appointment of a competent person to assist with health and safety
- Monitoring of occupational health

Fire Safety Regulations, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002

Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981

Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (MHOR updated 2004).

Each of these is based on a risk assessment approach; instead of telling employers that they must use particular control measures or pieces of equipment, they ask that employers make their own decisions about what is right for their workplace and their type and size of business. Employers are allowed to be the experts on their own business and, as long as they can show that they have reduced risk to acceptable levels using appropriate methods they will be meeting their legal duties.

Examples of using risk assessment to meet the requirements of these 4 pieces of legislation include;

- Identifying clients who will be at increased risk if a fire starts and creating their own personal emergency evacuation plan (peep)
- Determining which cleaning materials may cause skin problems and introducing gloves to manage the risk
- Estimating how many, and what type, of accidents and medical emergencies may occur and using this information to stock first aid kits
- Determining the specific assistance needs of a client and introducing suitable equipment.

Even in the most risk aware workplaces accidents still happen and these must be appropriately reported and recorded. Make sure you are familiar with the accident book or

forms used and that you know how and when to complete them. Certain incidents must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the following regulations:

Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations enable enforcement agencies to monitor workplace accidents and ill health. Among other things, they can then identify common types of accident; see which types of workplace experience which types of illness and injury; and track the spread of infections.

Employers and managers have a duty to report certain incidents either by telephone (fatalities and major incidents only) or online (www.hse.gov.uk/riddor); reportable events include:

- Accidental death
- Accident resulting in more than 7 days absence from work
- Certain diseases / illnesses (a full list is accessible from the RIDDOR website)
- Injuries to non-employees requiring immediate medical attention
- Near misses (incidents that could have caused serious injury but didn't e.g. a hoist sling tearing while in use)
- Events such as fires or collapse of buildings

Information gathered under RIDDOR is used to compile annual statistics for workplace safety and can be used by employers carrying out risk assessments to identify areas of concern. For example, if statistics show that more carers are affected by lower back injuries each year than other types of worker, care providers know that they need to pay particular attention to potential causes and prevention.

Risk assessment is a necessary skill for both legal and practical reasons. In this manual we will look at the steps involved in carrying out assessments and the different ways in which they can be used to manage workplace hazards.

Chapter Two

Risk assessment initiating

This manual is primarily concerned with formal risk assessments, but as we identified in Chapter one all employees should be carrying out informal risk assessments while they work.

Formal risk assessments should be done by employers and managers who are competent; this means that they should:

- Understand the risk assessment process and have been trained to carry them out
- Have experience of their working environment and the type of work activities that go on in it
- Be able to identify appropriate control measures and weigh up the costs and benefits of implementing them
- Know the legal framework for Health and Safety at work
- Be able to communicate their findings

Formal risk assessments follow a 5 step process which we will look at individually; the steps are:

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record your findings and implement them
5. Review your assessment and update if necessary (HSE 2011)

Informal risk assessments

Informal risk assessments do not have to take this step by step approach; they are concerned only with identifying hazards, recognizing how harm might be caused and to whom, and deciding on control measures to reduce the risk. Informal risk assessments are done ‘on the go’ while the hazardous task is being planned and carried out.

You almost certainly carry out informal risk assessments on a daily basis; if you didn’t you would be lucky to get through the day in one piece. Every day examples include using the ‘green cross code’ to cross the road and using the ‘mirror, signal, manoeuvre’ sequence, when driving a car.

You may think that you do these things without thinking, and sometimes that’s probably true, we are all guilty of operating on autopilot at times. However, when we act without thought we’re in danger and we do things like stepping into the road without looking or turning into oncoming traffic.

The more we do something, the more natural the thinking process becomes and the less aware we are that we are doing it. So, while a child will stand at the side of the road and talk

themselves through the process of checking for traffic, an adult will look both ways and make the necessary calculations much more quickly.

Experienced carers become quicker and more competent at carrying out tasks because they have done them many times before and they have developed safe techniques; however, experience can also introduce risks as with repetition comes complacency. If you have done something 99 times you don't expect to have difficulty doing it a hundredth time and you may miss the fact that something in the situation has changed and you need to alter your actions to allow for it.

For example:

Bedding is stored on a shelf above your head; you usually stand on tiptoe and pull out what you need, there are steps but you've never used them because you find it easier not to. One day as you pull on a duvet cover a heavy box which was balanced on top of it falls onto your head.

You have been injured because you failed to carry out the task you were doing in a safe way; the fact that you had got away with it for so long is really only luck because you were not taking the necessary actions to maintain safety.

When you are working you must always be looking out for dangers and taking action to avoid them. For example, when you assess manual handling tasks you can use the word TILE to help you to remember the factors you need to consider.

Activities

- What has to be done?
- What do we want to achieve?
- What is likely to be involved?

Individual (you)

- Am I capable, competent and confident that I can do this?
- Do I have the training and experience to do it safely?
- How am I feeling today, am I fully fit?
- Am I dressed appropriately (comfortable clothing, not too loose or too tight; sensible shoes)

Load (inanimate)

- How big is it?
- Is it easy to hold?
- How heavy?
- Does it have sharp edges?
- Is it unstable?

Environment

- Is there space?
- What's the flooring like?
- Have I got to go through doors / up stairs? How difficult will this be?
- Are there bits of furniture in the way?
- Will there be people about?
- Is the lighting adequate?

Try answering the questions in the table below as if you were assessing a task.

Mrs Jarman wants you to help her out of bed; Use a note pad to note what you think would be the appropriate information to enable you to carry out the task safely.
Where would you look for details of the level of assistance Mrs Jarman needs?
What would you need to find out about Mrs Jarman immediately prior to assisting her?
What do you need to know about yourself?
What hazards might you look for in the environment you are working in?
What would you do if there were new hazards present e.g. Mrs Jarman had become less physically able or her bed had been moved and your access was restricted?

If when you are working you come across new hazards or unexpected situations that you don't have experience of don't be afraid to ask for advice from a manager or more experienced colleague. It's particularly important that you are adequately trained before you use new equipment or carry out tasks such as administering medication. Your employer should have competence checks in place to ensure that all employees have the necessary skills to work safely.

Formal risk assessments

The first thing that employers and managers need to do when carrying out risk assessments is to identify the hazards within the workplace that need to be assessed. A hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm; they can be identified in the following ways:

- By talking to staff – find out what they think the threats to their safety are
- Looking at accident reports and workplace accident and ill health statistics – identify accidents and health problems that are common in health care settings or have previously occurred in this particular workplace
- Touring the premises looking for problems – spotting dangerous working practices; improperly stored equipment; poor maintenance etc.
- Using experience and knowledge of the premises and working practices – knowing when and where people might be at risk; knowing who has access to different areas and the types of work activity which occur

Employers can put together a preliminary checklist of hazards they may expect to find and then use this to shape their inspection and interviews with staff. Assessors should remain open minded; it's important to be thorough when touring premises and to encourage honesty when asking for feedback from employees.

There are 3 main categories of hazard affecting workplace accidents and ill health, they are:

1. Occupational – anything related to the type of work being done
2. Environmental – the place the work is carried out
3. Human – the people doing the work

So, in health and social care your main concerns might be as follows:

Professional issues

- The unpredictable nature of people requiring care
- Infectious illnesses and handling of bodily fluids
- Repetitive work e.g. making beds, cleaning tasks
- People with mobility problems
- Stress
- Cleaning / laundry chemicals

Environmental factors

- Lack of space to carry out tasks safely, particularly on adapted premises
- Poorly maintained flooring or outside areas
- Heat
- Poor lighting

Human factors

- Lack of training / competence
- Impatience
- Rushing
- Lack of compassion
- Carelessness
- Poor concentration

Choose a room in your workplace (e.g. the kitchen) and think of as many hazards as you can identify; record what you think you might encounter then inspect the room and add to your lists. (Use a note pad to record the risk factors and hazards)

<i>Risk factor</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional• Environmental• Human

Chapter Three

Risk Understanding

Employers must take a common-sense approach to risk assessment; it is meant to be a structure for practical measures to reduce risk suitably and sufficiently; it is not meant to generate mountains of paperwork and employers do not have to waste time creating policies to prevent incidents that may not reasonably be expected to occur.

For example, legend has it that libraries have refused to allow customers to borrow staplers on the grounds that they might injure themselves or others. Employees have justified this by pointing out that staplers are work equipment covered by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 which require that employers provide adequate training, information, instruction and supervision to use equipment safely.

Staplers are work equipment, but most competent adults can be trusted to use them without incident; they are unlikely to require risk assessing.

Where little or no risk exists, formal assessments to create safe working policies and procedures are unnecessary and waste valuable time and resources. Good risk assessment allows employers to prioritise their time and money to ensure the health and safety of all who may be affected.

Victim

Once hazards have been identified the next step in the process is to decide who (or what) may be harmed and what form that harm may take.

The legislation refers to the employers' responsibility to protect 'employees and **anyone who might be affected by work practices**'; this might include:

- Clients
- Visitors
- Contractors
- Neighbours
- Passers by

These groups may also need to be subdivided according to special needs; for example employees may be more, or less, at risk if they are young, old, new, pregnant, already injured or suffering ill health. There will be special considerations for children entering the premises and person-centred approaches to care require that each client is assessed as an individual.

As an employee you have a responsibility to make your employer aware of any special circumstances that increase your risk of harm or make you a potential risk to others. You must let them know:

- If you have existing joint or spinal injuries

- If you have an infectious illness
- Any health conditions which may affect your needs at work
- Any sensory difficulties e.g. if you would be unable to hear an alarm
- If you are pregnant (you have a duty to let them know 15 weeks before your due date)
- If you have recently had a baby or are breastfeeding

As pregnant women have no duty to inform their employer in the early stages, their employer may be unaware that they or their baby are at risk of harm. For this reason the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations places a specific duty on employers to assess risks for all women of child bearing age and to introduce suitable control measures.

It should be straightforward to decide who might be at risk in the workplace; deciding how they might be harmed may be more difficult. Some forms of injury or health problems may be fairly obvious, for example, if you work in the kitchen there will be an increased risk of burns from fats and hot surfaces; a higher chance of slipping; and injuries from knives will also be fairly common.

Complications occur when risks become more likely with increased exposure or when the harm done is less visible than a burn or cut. Risk assessors must understand the causes of conditions such as work related upper limb disorders (wrulds) resulting from repetitive stress to the wrists, elbows or shoulders; respiratory difficulties caused by inhaling substances; and sight deterioration associated with prolonged use of display screen equipment.

Make a note on your note pad of who you think might be harmed by the Hazards below and what harm may occur?

<i>Hazard</i>
Non – mobile client to be transferred from bed to chair
Dishwasher detergent
Deep fat fryers

Environment issues

It's not just people who can be harmed by poor working practices; the environment may also be at risk. Employers have a duty to protect the environment by handling chemicals safely, disposing of waste properly and not creating air pollution. Specific hazards in your workplace would include clinical waste, medications and cleaning chemicals.

Possibility of harm

Risk assessment can be affected by personal prejudices and attitude to risk; if you are a cautious person you may overestimate risks while a more daring individual might underestimate them. To get a more realistic idea of dangers assessors should look for evidence to inform their calculations; accident reports and national statistics may be useful.

A simple way of judging risk is to give numerical values to severity and likelihood of harm and then multiply these together to get degree of risk. This can work as follows:

Severity:

1. Minor (a bruise or cut)
2. Significant (a broken bone or over 7 day injury)
3. Major (death, serious injury or chronic illness)

Likelihood:

1. Unlikely
2. Possible – could happen / may occur regularly
3. Imminent – will almost certainly happen / will happen frequently

A hazard rated as unlikely to happen (1), potentially causing minor injury (1) has a risk value of 1 (1 x 1); while a hazard rated as imminent (3) and likely to cause major harm (3) would have a value of 9 (3x 3). These values can then be used to prioritise control measures; the higher the number the more urgently action should be taken.

Risk management

Risk assessment can be quite a negative process; it focuses on potential for harm and then identifies ways of controlling dangers with the main aim of protecting workers. Care providers have to maintain awareness that their work environment is their clients' home and anything that is done to ensure safety has an impact. For example, emergency exits have to be signposted but it's not 'normal' to have signs all over your house and they can make the premises look institutional.

While workers have a right to be protected and a duty to maintain the safety of others, your clients have to be protected but, they also have the right to take risks if they choose to do so.

It's important that you do not limit clients' freedoms unnecessarily; you have a duty of care to protect them but this has to balance with their rights. You cannot use health and safety concerns or your own personal feelings to limit clients' lives. You must take a positive approach; listen to what the client wants and focus on how it can be achieved **not** the reasons why it might be difficult.

The Human Rights Act 1998 has been used to challenge health authorities' use of blanket policies such as 'no lifting'; these have been found to be unlawful as they do not allow for

differences between individuals, they remove freedom of choice and they may be discriminatory. (Ref The Queen v. East Sussex County Council 2003).

Good risk management maintains clients' safety without affecting their freedoms. Suitably trained care staff must risk assess clients' activities and make appropriate decisions about any potential dangers. These risk assessments should be done with the intention of enabling the activity to go ahead; they must not be attempts to find reasons why something shouldn't happen.

Risk assessment has to be carried out on an individual basis in order to support equality and fairness; assessments must not rely on stereotypical ideas of client's conditions. People with identical diagnoses (e.g. dementia, epilepsy) will be completely different in terms of abilities and disabilities so while one may be able to live independently another may require a significant amount of support.

Decision making must be without prejudice or assumption; whoever carries out risk assessments must be confident in their abilities and unafraid of legal penalties. Good record keeping is essential so that if an individual does come to harm the reasons for allowing them to take actions are properly documented.

Chapter Four

Evaluating and materializing Risk Assessments

The law requires employers to do everything ‘reasonably practicable’ and take ‘suitable and sufficient’ action to reduce risks to acceptable levels. They must decide on appropriate control measures; communicate these measures to employees and others who need to know; and carry out reassessments when necessary.

Control measures

Employers must balance the level of risk against the cost, effort and time involved in introducing particular control measures. Assessments of level of risk should be used to prioritise work; the closer to 9 the value is, the sooner action must be taken to reduce the risk to within safe limits.

Quick and easy control measures can be dealt with straight away; for example fixing limiters to windows to prevent people falling out of them is a cheap job that takes little time but will effectively prevent harm. More complicated measures may need to be planned and budgeted for; risk assessors should produce time scales within which they expect work to be done. If a hazard can be removed altogether, this should be done. If it’s not possible an effective and appropriate control measure should be used.

Control measures include:

- Substitution – find a safer alternative e.g. use less hazardous chemicals
- Isolation – prevent access with guards or locked doors
- Reduce exposure – rotate staff around different tasks
- Provide training
- Introduce personal protective equipment (PPE) – e.g. gloves
- Provide welfare facilities e.g. sinks for handwashing

The first three measures on the list are more effective than the last three which require people to change their behaviours. Training alone should not be relied on to remove risk but should be introduced in addition to other measures. For example the risks of moving and handling are reduced but not removed by the introduction of equipment; employees also need training on how to use the equipment safely.

Training and PPE will only work if competence and compliance are checked afterwards so appropriate supervision is necessary.

Welfare facilities are the bare minimum requirements for employers to protect the health and welfare of their employees.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Regulations 2002

PPE is a way of reducing risk when a hazard cannot be adequately controlled by other means. If a risk assessment identifies a need for PPE the employer must:

- Provide appropriate PPE free of charge for each employee affected by the hazard
- Make sure the equipment is available when and where it is needed, and is in good working order
- Make sure PPE complies with appropriate British and European standards (it should be CE marked)

Employees must wear PPE when indicated by risk assessments and use it according to the information or training they have received.

Personal protective equipment you may use includes:

- Gloves – disposable or rubber to prevent cross contamination when handling foods, bodily fluids etc.
- Aprons – for kitchen wear or personal care; they should be colour coded according to use

Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981

Whatever control measures you have in place in your workplace, it's also necessary to make provisions for treating injuries and medical emergencies in order to minimise harm.

Employers need to ensure that they have adequate first aid equipment, trained first aiders and procedures for reporting and recording. There are no set rules for what has to be provided but your employer (with the help of nominated first aiders) must decide on the type of incidents which may occur and the frequency with which they may happen. They should use this information to decide what to put in first aid kits and to plan staff training needs.

First aid tools:

- Should include gloves, plasters and dressings
- Will be positioned to be easily accessible if an emergency occurs
- Blankets and aprons should be stored with them
- Medicines and creams have no place in them
- Must be kept properly stocked and be checked regularly by a nominated individual

First aiders:

- Must be available on each shift
- Training must be up to date and appropriate

Documentation:

- An accident / incident report must be completed if first aid is required
- Report under RIDDOR when necessary

Possible control measures for the hazards identified on page 15:

<i>Hazard</i>	<i>Who may be harmed? What harm may occur?</i>	<i>Control measures</i>
Non – mobile client to be transferred from bed to chair	Carers / clients Anything from cuts and bruises to fatalities	Introduce equipment e.g. hoist Training for staff Manoeuvre to be carried out by 2 members of staff
Dishwasher detergent	Clients / children may mistake for a drink if stored badly; may cause serious damage to digestive system, can be fatal	Store in original container in an appropriate place that is inaccessible to clients and visitors. Ensure first aid data is available
Deep fat fryers	Kitchen workers are at highest risk of burns; may cause fires which put anyone on premises at risk	Keep them properly maintained and supervise at all times Keep the floor clean and dry to avoid slips Have a fire blanket in the kitchen

Record searching and implementing

Control measures will only be effective if people are aware of them and know the part they play in implementing them. The findings of risk assessment should be used to create

safe working policies and procedures which will need to be written down and communicated.

Written safe working procedures will form part of your organization's health and safety policies and where appropriate will be part of clients' care plans. It's important that you know how and when to access information that you need to work safely.

The following measures may be necessary to ensure that control measures are used:

- Written information is given to staff and others (e.g. clients) who may benefit from it. For example if a client has an infectious illness people working in or entering the premises may be given a leaflet on precautions such as handwashing
- A combination of training and supervision is used to ensure that staff are competent. If you get a new piece of equipment you should be shown how to use it, and be observed using it before you can work unsupervised
- Signs remind people of safe or unsafe behavior e.g. 'Now wash your hands' 'fire door, keep shut' or 'no naked flames'
- Managers and supervisors lead by example, they do not use shortcuts.

For example, if safe practice requires the use of a step ladder in a storage area senior staff must not be seen standing on shelves or using other improvised methods of reaching above head height.

Assessment Review

Risk assessments are working documents which should adapt as the workplace changes. The success of control measures should be monitored and reviews carried out when necessary to maintain safety.

Reviews should happen:

- If an accident occurs or someone develops a work related illness
- If new equipment is introduced
- When new employees start or a new client is admitted
- If the layout or use of a room changes
- To cover contractors carrying out work e.g. decorating
- On a regular basis – at least annually

Conclusion

Risk assessment is the key to health and safety at work; the dangers associated with work practices, equipment, substances and unpredictable people must all be adequately controlled.

Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient to reduce risk to safe levels; employees are to be protected as far as is reasonably practicable, while clients may choose to tolerate a degree of risk to maintain their quality of life and their chosen lifestyle.

Employers must ensure that control measures are monitored for effectiveness and adapted when necessary to meet changing needs.