

Procedure: Management of Risk Assessments

What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people and the environment, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions (control measures) or should do more to prevent harm.

The Law

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires that all employers carry out suitable and sufficient assessments of the risks to the health, safety and welfare of their employees to which they are exposed while at work. Reasonable steps need to be taken to reduce this harm. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) states that *a risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees, but your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have covered all you need to.*

Introduction

A risk assessment is an important step in protecting staff, pupils, visitors, volunteers, the environment and your establishment as a whole from harm. Think about how accidents and ill health can happen in your setting or through a particular task, identify the most likely, or dangerous hazards to ensure controls are implemented to reduce these.

It is also important to remember that other regulations are important for certain hazards identified, which may require their own set of control measures, such as Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1999. The HSE states that *these control measures do not have to be assessed separately but can be considered as part of, or an extension of, your overall risk assessment.*

Delegated Services (DS) is always happy to help and can offer training where needed.

Monitoring of Risk Assessments *(This is a model document, so this particular part of the process will need to be considered by your setting to ensure it states the monitoring procedure that you follow, below is an example of how this could be carried out)*

At the start of the Academic Year the Health & Safety Committee will ask all departments, houses, trips, sports, high risk departments (such as science, D&T, dance etc.) to confirm the risk assessments from the previous year (name of assessment, date, completed by) and that the assessments, where appropriate have been reviewed for the start of the year and/or that they will be reviewed at the necessary time. For example, a school trip taking place in May, assessment is likely to be carried out in April, a sports assessment at the start of the session.

Where new equipment or a new process has been introduced a risk assessment will need to be in place, it may even need to be written before the new equipment arrives. For example, who will install and how will they access the building etc.

There will be times when Official Inspectors and Auditors ask how the school/academy manages its risk assessment process. How do we ensure that we are managing and reducing the risks to staff, pupils, parents, visitors and members of the public who come into contact with our school? These persons will be provided with access to the school/academy system and where they will be able to locate assessments.

Carrying out the assessment

DS recommends using a Risk Assessment template throughout your setting. Whether it is at a school, multi academy trust, community project or charity ensure all staff use the same template. The template is for the more common issues and it is recognised there are special formats for more hazardous/complex situations, such as Fire risk assessments, also that sometimes a Dynamic, no paper, on your toes risk assessment is needed in certain circumstances, such as during an unexpected event.

*DS has provided two risk assessment templates and instruction guidance based on the competence of the staff writing the risk assessment. For risk assessments written by most staff with basic risk assessment training then DS advise reading the **Standard Risk assessment template instructions** and then complete the **Standard risk assessment template**. Any staff members that have formal health and safety qualifications such as IOSH or NEBOSH, we have added further details to create a more advanced risk assessment. Please see **Advanced Risk Assessment template instructions** and also the **Advanced Risk Assessment template** for further details. These can all be found in **Risk Assessments: General folder in Go To**. If you are using your own templates and instructions then indicate where this can be located in this document*

By all staff using the same template it means that there is a conformity and understanding of the format required.

To create a more robust risk assessment it is advisable to enter background and context regarding the activity, task or area being assessed. All that are involved with the risk assessment should be named.

A **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, open drawer etc.

The **risk** is the chance that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

There are 5 steps to carrying out the risk assessment.

Step 1: Identify the hazards

Consider how someone may be harmed, this will help to identify the hazards, disregard the inconsequential or trivial.

Walk around your classroom, office, workspace. Think through your task or activity. Ask the staff doing the task, consider the location, duration, purpose of your visit, are there long-term health

hazards associated with the task. Consult the manufacturer's instructions, safety data sheets, trade associations, associated websites etc.

The HSE recommends:

- *Check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in explaining the hazards and putting them in their true perspective;*
- *Look back at your accident and ill-health records – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards;*
- *Take account of non-routine operations (e.g., maintenance, cleaning operations or changes in production cycles);*
- *Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (e.g., high levels of noise or exposure to harmful substances);*
- *Visit the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk) – HSE publishes practical guidance on hazards and how to control them.*

Step 2: Who may be harmed

Consider each hazard: who may be harmed and how they may be harmed.

Pupils, teachers, office staff, cleaners, maintenance or security staff, visitors or contractors etc. Identify groups, which are more vulnerable such as young persons, the disabled, lone working staff, contractors, members of the public, etc. This will help you to identify the best way to control the risk.

The HSE says to remember:

- *Some workers may have particular requirements, e.g., new and young workers, migrant workers, new or expectant mothers, people with disabilities, temporary workers, contractors, homeworkers and lone workers (www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers);*
- *Think about people who might not be in the workplace all the time, such as visitors, contractors and maintenance workers;*
- *Take members of the public into account if they could be harmed by your work activities;*
- *If you share a workplace with another business, consider how your work affects others and how their work affects you and your workers. Talk to each other and make sure controls are in place;*
- *Ask your workers if there is anyone you may have missed.*

Step 3: Evaluate the risks

Having spotted the hazards, consider what is already in place to control them, is there more that could be done? You're only expected to include that which you are reasonably likely to know, not anticipate the unforeseeable.

Apply the following principles, if possible, in the following order: -

- Can I remove the hazard altogether;
- Can I reduce the risks so that harm is less likely? e.g., switch to using a less hazardous chemical;
- Can I prevent access to the hazard? e.g., by guarding, barriers;
- Can I organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard, e.g., such as reducing time spent in a hazardous situation;

- Is it possible to issue personal protective equipment? e.g., clothing, footwear, goggles, etc.; Can I provide welfare facilities? e.g., first aid, removal of contamination;
- Have I consulted and involved employees?

The HSE states:

- *Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents is a low-cost precaution, considering the risks. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen;*
- *Involve your workers, so you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards (www.hse.gov.uk/involvement);*
- *If you control a number of similar workplaces containing similar activities, you can produce a model risk assessment reflecting the common hazards and risks associated with these activities.*

You may decide to apply model assessments developed by trade associations, employers' bodies or other organisations such as DS for a particular task or environment, however you can only do so if you:

- satisfy yourself that the model assessment is appropriate to your type of work;
- adapt the model to the detail of your own work situations, including any extension necessary to cover hazards and risks not referred to in the model.

There is an action plan to complete for medium or high risk rated hazards, what additional precautions do you need to either eliminate or reduce the risk to an acceptable level?

For instance: -

You may consider that staff require refresher training on the machinery/task/activity. You may feel that before the trip goes ahead the ratio of staff to pupils should be increased. Without the increase in staff, you could not go ahead with the trip.

There may have been a change of legislation or best practice and therefore new equipment or process is required.

Step 4 – Recording your significant findings

*An easy way to record your findings is by using the DS risk assessment template. At DS we have tried to make this process as understandable and easy to follow as possible, and have produced two documents to help. The first is the Instruction document, which gives details of all of the information you should need to assist you in writing the risk assessment so that it is suitable and sufficient. The second is the template, which is the same thing but totally stripped back, these are available in standard or advanced style. For more details, see **Go To A to Z in Risk Assessment: general folder**. Simply copy the template, add your own details, such as the logo, or perhaps standard colours that you use, and save as your own template. This can be copied, renamed and used for each assessment.*

The risk assessment should be used to communicate to staff and manage the risks. This does not need to be a big exercise. The important thing is to ensure that significant risks are noted and controlled.

The HSE recommends a risk assessment must be suitable and sufficient, i.e., it should show that:

- *a proper check was made;*
- *you asked who might be affected;*
- *you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved;*
- *the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low;*
- *you involved your employees or their representatives in the process.*

You may have outstanding issues. If so prioritise; say what needs to be done, by when and by whom. Remember the assessment demonstrates how the event, task, activity etc. is to be managed. For example, staff to carry out inspection before use, LEV used and regularly checked, information provided to staff and pupils via a briefing.

Step 5 – Monitor and Review

Few activities, classrooms, workspaces, equipment etc. stay the same. Sooner or later a new piece of equipment, substance, procedure etc. is brought in; this can lead to new hazards and therefore the assessment will need to be reviewed.

Should no changes occur that you are aware of there will still be a need to review the assessment and it is suggested that the assessment be reviewed on a regular basis.

DS recognises that this can feel like a daunting task and recommends risk assessments are reviewed on a rolling basis, with a certain amount every year over a three-year period. This ensures the process is less time consuming and as long as there is no change then this will be considered a regular basis as referred to by the HSE.

The HSE recommend that you ask yourself:

- *Have there been any significant changes?*
- *Are there improvements you still need to make?*
- *Have your workers spotted a problem?*
- *Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses?*

Once the completed assessments have been shared with appropriate staff, they need to be stored and accessible to all that may require to see them, in a central computer storage area or printed and filed. The locations need to be known to all involved. *(Insert details)*

To identify improvements and changes that have been made it is good practice to keep records of previous assessments, after review, document control is essential. This is also relevant for any claims that are later made against the establishment. This will ensure that all information and control measures at the time of the incident are considered. It is recommended that risk assessments should be kept for a minimum of 3 years or in the case of pupils, until they are 21 as they could always make their own claim when adults.

Signature and Sharing with Staff

An important section of the template is who the assessment will be shared with. For example, naming the staff on the trip, activity or doing the task, at induction. All staff that are involved must read and understand the hazards present and the control measures in place and then sign. This needs to be shared and updated each time any changes are made.

For further information from the HSE, please go to <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/> and for the guidance used in this document please visit <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.htm>

If you require any further information, support or advice please contact Delegated Services:

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