



North

Yorkshire County Council

Children and Young People's Service

## RISK ASSESSMENT

### INTRODUCTION

A fundamental part of managing health and safety successfully is to assess risks. Risk assessment will help to reduce workplace injuries, diseases and property damage by identifying potential causes and enabling something to be done to prevent harm or damage occurring.

Risk assessment is concerned with identifying any activity, process or situation that can cause harm and evaluating what degree of harm could be caused and whether or not it is likely to happen. Health and Safety practitioners refer to evaluating the likelihood of a hazard causing harm and the severity of the consequences.

When determining the severity of the consequences regard has to be given of the number of people that are likely to be affected and the type of people that are likely to be affected for example children, pregnant workers, people with disabilities should be given greater protection than able bodied and skilled people.

### LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT

The **Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regs 1999** make more explicit the general duties laid down within the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**. Their aim is to encourage a systematic and organised approach to health and safety in the workplace with risk assessments being a vital element.

Regulation 3 of the **MHSW Regs 1999** states that:

“Every employer shall make a ‘suitable and sufficient’ assessment of

- (a) The risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work
- (b) The risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking.

A risk assessment is a systematic consideration of the ways an environment, equipment or activities can cause harm to anybody. Followed by the decisions on the restrictions and precautions/control measures needed to make the risk acceptably low.

### WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF A RISK ASSESSMENT

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people. The important thing you need to decide is whether a hazard is

significant and whether you have it covered by satisfactory precautions so that any remaining risk is small.

There is no single method of risk assessment and the format will depend on the site and risk being considered. There are various NYCC risk assessment formats available dependent upon the subject being assessed, but it is recommended the HSE '5 steps to risk assessment' is essential reading for anyone involved in risk assessment.

A risk assessment may take many different formats but there are 5 key elements or steps which must be included:

1. The person or group affected and location – include visitors, trespassers, staff
2. The hazard
3. The risk rating (severity and likelihood) prior to and after the control measures
4. The control measures
5. Date and name of person completing the risk assessment

### **STEP 1: LOOK FOR THE HAZARDS AND CONSULT ACCIDENT RECORDS**

Walk around your School and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ignore the trivial and concentrate on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people.

Staff working in the area will have knowledge of hazards that may not be immediately obvious. Staff should be consulted at all stages of the assessment. Accidents records will also help to identify hazards that have caused harm.

### **STEP 2: DECIDE WHO MAY BE HARMED AND HOW**

In most instances this will be pupils and staff, although you may also need to consider visitors and maintenance staff, such as cleaning and catering staff. When identifying hazards ask yourself if the hazard could cause harm or injury, if you think it could then it is advisable to evaluate the level of risk.

If you do not believe the hazard will cause harm or injury, nothing more needs to be done – although it is advisable to make a note that the hazard was considered and believed not to present a risk.

When you identify a hazard you should decide what type of assessment should be carried out. If you identify that someone may injure themselves when lifting equipment you should then undertake a manual handling assessment. If you identify that someone is using a computer to carry their work you should undertake a display screen equipment assessment.

### **STEP 3: EVALUATE THE RISK AND DECIDE WHETHER THE EXISTING PRECAUTIONS ARE ADEQUATE OR MORE SHOULD BE DONE**

Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. This will determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains.

What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is Unacceptable, Substantial, Moderate or Acceptable/Trivial. Your real aim is to make all risks small by adding to your precautions as necessary. In taking action ask yourself:

- Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When looking to control risk apply the following principles:

- Try a less risky option
- Prevent access to the hazard (e.g. placing the furniture in front of glazing or hot pipework)
- Organise activities to prevent or reduce exposure to the hazard
- Issue personal protective equipment (e.g. washing facilities for removal of contamination and first aid).

#### **STEP 4: RECORD YOUR FINDINGS**

There is no standard form that risk assessments must be written on, although forms are available to assist in recording risks.

Risk assessments need to be suitable and sufficient – not perfect. You need to be able to show:

- 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 any remaining risk is low

Keep the written record for future reference or use; it can help you if you are asked what precautions have been taken, or if a claim is made following an accident.

#### **STEP 5: REVIEW YOUR ASSESSMENT AND REVISE IT IF NECESSARY**

Sooner or later you may bring in new equipment, substances, procedures and activities which could lead to new hazards, If there is any significant change to an existing assessment, add to the assessment to take account of the new hazard.

Don't amend your assessment for every trivial change, however if a new activity introduces significant new hazards of its own, you should consider them in their own right. If in doubt record the changes and amendments to any controls in place.

Risk assessment does not necessarily require a lot of technical knowledge about systems and processes. It does require a realistic and reasonable view to be taken about what harm may be caused and the likelihood that this will happen.

Most hazards have the potential to cause death or serious injury, however you need to ask whether this is a realistic outcome for the circumstances. If the answer is no then you will need to determine the level of harm you believe may occur.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE AND COMPETENT TO COMPLETE A RISK ASSESSMENT

The MHSW Regs state that “employers and the self employed are expected to take reasonable steps to help themselves identify risks”. The most appropriate person to complete a risk assessment and to be automatically consulted in the process is the person most affected by the activity or potential hazard.

There are some specific roles which require specialised training such as Educational Visits Co-ordinators and Asbestos Management.

**North Yorkshire County Council** has a duty to provide assistance and guidance on the management of risk assessments.

**The Headteacher** has a duty to manage risk assessment in their school, this includes ensuring a robust system of identifying hazards that require risk assessment, and ensuring that that risk assessment is ‘suitable and sufficient’, including the key elements of risk assessment, and ensuring that the risk assessment is appropriately communicated to all the relevant people/pupils.

The Headteacher has an overall duty to appoint the appropriate, competent individual to consult and complete the risk assessment. This ensures a whole school cultural adoption of health and safety and risk management. All staff should be involved in the management and review of risks.

**Staff – Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Caretakers and Cleaners** have a duty to assist and co-operate with the risk assessment process and comply with control measures and systems. Competency is determined by the persons experience and knowledge of the task being assessed.

**Governors:** Guidance on Governing Body Committee and Health and Safety Committees term of reference: Page 15, Item 4 ‘Ensure that risk assessments are carried out and implemented’. It is recommended that the Governing Body agrees and monitors the program of risk assessment, and is satisfied by documented evidence that all appropriate risks have been identified, that the risk assessment is ‘suitable and sufficient’ and review robust systems.

Recommended reading - Governors Guide to Managing Property Risks and Property related Health and Safety Risks, Published September 2004 by NYCC Education Service.

**Contractors:** – Essential Reading

1. Devolved Capital Building Projects
2. Managing Property and Contractor Risks

The Headteacher must be satisfied that all appropriate measures have been taken to ensure the continued safety of premises, building users and contractors. This includes ensuring that safe working practises have been agreed and duly communicated to all staff.

**Service Providers:** e.g. Services provided by NYCC such as Caretaking and Cleaning are provided with their own generic health and safety policy, safe working practises, COSHH data sheets and risk assessments. The Headteacher should be satisfied that these are available and being duly adhered to.

Specialist contractors such as Physique Sports, Grounds Maintenance, Building Cleaning, County Caterers, BDM contractors, Protec, Chubb and Conex are duly monitored by the appointing agent. The Headteacher need only be satisfied that the school health and safety policy is not undermined.

**Trade Unions:** As consulting authority all reasonable provision should be made to include Representatives in the process of risk assessment.

**Parents:** Headteacher may consider it appropriate in some risk assessment processes to involve and consult with parents, such as in cases of medical needs risk assessments and EVC.

**Pupils:** Schools are advised that issues of health and safety and risk assessment are inherent within lesson planning and school culture. Pupils should be advised and considered in the language of relevant risk assessment to ensure their co-operation and ownership of risk assessment control measures.

**School Link Advisers, Professional Services:** School Link Advisers and professional advisers such as Occupational Health are valuable sources of assistance and guidance on specific related issues of risk assessment.

There are also Safety Risk Advisers available by the Schools Health and Safety Risk Management Traded Service, who specifically advise on health and safety management systems, and risk assessment procedures. Membership of the School HandS Traded Service includes risk assessment software and a supporting website.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE RISK ASSESSED

Throughout daily activities we all make conscious and unconscious (dynamic) risk assessments, and there are many things which do not warrant formal documented risk assessments. This is because they are deemed trivial, or that when dynamically considering 'worst case' likelihood and severity the risk assessment is very low. (See *Appendix Risk Rating*.)

Some risk assessments are addressed by formal documented procedures such as the required annual premises inspection, which may highlight issues such as problems with certain roofs, lighting, heating and housekeeping.

## STATUTORY RISK ASSESSMENTS

A number of different regulations require annual or bi-annual formal risk assessments, (or special case risk assessments such as pregnancy or young person at work), and it is recommended that these are automatically scheduled for review at the beginning of each school year.

This list is suggestive but not exhaustive and the site should ensure all aspects of hazards have been considered.

1. Fire
2. Security
3. Display Screen Equipment

4. Manual Handling
5. Asbestos
6. First Aid and Emergency
7. Medical Matters
8. Electrical Equipment
9. Work Equipment
10. New and expectant mothers
11. COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health)
12. EVC (Educational Visits Co-ordinator)

## CONCLUSION

The risk assessment process should follow a systematic approach of:

- **Planning**, hazard identification. competent person monitor prioritised program of risk assessment
- **Implementation**. Risk assessment completion, communication of control measures
- **Review** annually unless situation or conditions change
- **Audit**. Governor consultation – formal audit from NYCC or in-house regular audit of prioritised program
- **Action**. Acknowledge actions needed, following review and audit. Ensure all changes implemented.
- Ensure a robust management system of audit and action would with stand external scrutiny.