

Risk

Assessment

Guidance

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# Introduction

The most effective method of achieving high standards of health and safety is to anticipate the effect of work activities and service delivery on people and premises prior to commencement. There is a legal requirement for risk assessments to be conducted under the **Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR)**. The regulation requires that a risk assessment is ‘suitable and sufficient’ – this means that it includes all the relevant points and is easily understood by those who have to work under it.

The objective of this Guidance is to identify Health and Safety risks associated with work activities, to develop safe working methods as required, to eliminate or reduce the risks as far as is reasonably practicable, and in doing so protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and others affected by work being carried out by Stirling Council.

This Guidance should be read in conjunction with the Council’s Health & Safety Policy.

# Definitions

A **‘Risk Assessment’ (RA)** is simply a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have enough precautions or whether you should do more.

A **‘Safe Working Method’ (SWM)** sometimes referred to as a method statement is not required by law but needs to be considered.

It describes in a logical sequence exactly how a more complex higher risk job is to be carried out in a safe manner and without risks to health. It includes all the risks identified in the risk assessment and the measures needed to control those risks. This allows the job to be properly planned and resourced.

Whether safe working method statements are used or not, it is essential to make sure that risks are controlled.

A ‘**Personal Protective Equipment Guidance Form’ (PGF)** is a tailored guidance document used to offer guidance to the users of the assessment to ensure the correct PPE is issued and worn as required in conjunction with the associated risk assessment and safe working method (where developed). The Stirling Council template is populated with PPE symbols and terminology to assist, this must be tailored to the needs of the assessment and the PPE required so teams can add or delete as required for accuracy.

A ‘**Hazard’** is something with the potential to cause harm.

The ‘**Risk’** is the chance, high, medium or low, of someone being harmed by the hazard, and how serious the harm could be.

A ‘**Competent Person’** is someone with sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to carry out a task. In the case of risk assessments, the person needs to understand the task being assessed as well as the principles of risk assessment.

# Responsibilities

## Service Manager (Head of Establishment in Education)

Within their Service area, Service Managers are responsible for working with, all personnel in their areas, competent advisors and trade union representatives to identify and assess health and safety risks. Each risk assessment developed should be signed off by the appropriate Service Manager after consultation with the appropriate staff and before it is communicated to all affected employees.

Each Service Manager should ensure that risk assessments are carried out by competent staff. Suitable training/guidance to help people become the competent person can be sourced from the Organisational Development and Change Team and/or Corporate Health & Safety team if required.

## Line Management (including supervisory staff)

Within their team/area of responsibility, all those with line management responsibility are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate risk assessments and associated documents are developed and reviewed appropriately. Once the risk assessment is signed off by the Service Manager, they are responsible for ensuring that a written record is kept showing that these assessments have been shared with all appropriate employees, and that proof of understanding exists prior to them undertaking the associated work tasks. See forms at end of Guidance.

## Employees/Supply Staff/Agency Workers

It is important that employees engage with the development of risk assessments and associated documents, as they will often know the task best. They must confirm evidence of understanding of these as directed by their line manager.

All employees are responsible for complying with the relevant risk assessments during all work activities. If there are any issues with a risk assessment, each employee is responsible for highlighting this to their line manager so and preventive actions can be taken and the risk assessment is reviewed and updated accordingly.

## Corporate Health and Safety Team

The Corporate Health and Safety Team can provide advice, support, guidance and training on risk assessments. However, they are not experts in doing the numerous tasks carried out across the Council, so cannot write risk assessments for any team.

Risk assessments for each area will be reviewed as part of the team’s independent audit and scrutiny function.

## Employee/TU Safety Representatives

Appropriate Safety Representatives and/or a competent person from the workforce should be involved in developing and reviewing risk assessments with service management teams.

Safety Representatives have the right to request to see any risk assessment and associated documentation at any point. These must be provided within three working days of the request being made.

# Risk Assessment Procedure

The process of carrying out a risk assessment involves 5 Steps:

* Identifying hazards
* Identifying the people who may be harmed.
* Evaluate the risks
* Record the significant findings
* Review

These are often referred to as the five steps to risk assessment, see HSE guidance here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm>

The process with links to templates can be found here under Risk Assessment Guidance:

<http://source.stirling.gov.uk/pages/h-s-policies>

There are also template completed Risk Assessments for guidance use in the same areas.

These templates are for all general pre-identified risk assessments in the workplace.

Service sector ‘specialist’ assessment templates can also be utilised in conjunction with their professional bodies for services requiring them to meet sector specific legislation out with the day to day general assessments.

The risk assessment template also contains section titled Safe Working Method (SWM) and Personal Protective Equipment Guidance Form (PGF).

## Identifying Hazards

A good starting point is to walk around the workplace and think about what in activities, processes or substances used could cause injury or harm the health of employees or service users. However, it is easy to overlook hazards when you work with them every day.

Manufacturer’s instructions, or data sheets for chemicals, can be helpful in explaining hazards and putting them in perspective. It is important that non-routine work such as maintenance and cleaning are taken in to account when identifying hazards.

Looking at incident records may also help identify hazards. It is important to remember that exposure to long-term hazards where staff may have been exposed to harmful substances/agents also need included. This is particularly relevant for those infectious agents that have the potential to cause persistent or latent infections, or which may have serious long term consequences. This would also link to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health assessments required by the COSHH Guidance.

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) publishes a number of practical guides on hazards and how to control them: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm> General Workplace.

There is also Education specific information on the HSE website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/index.htm> & <http://www.hse.gov.uk/education/>

## Who might be harmed?

Many hazards identified will potentially harm employees, but it is also important to consider contractors, service users, visitors and the general public. Not everyone needs to be listed by name, but relevant groups of people should be listed (e.g. people working in the storeroom or passers-by).

It is important to remember that some of those who may be harmed may have particular requirements which may need special consideration. These include young people, migrant workers, new or expectant mothers or those working alone. For work activities occurring in public places, it should not be assumed that everyone can read and understand notices.

Including employees, school pupils and where possible service users when carrying out the risk assessments is key to ensuring accurate assessment. They can help out, as they can assist in identifying hazards and be involved with the implementation of sensible solutions/control measures which may not be immediately apparent to those carrying out risk assessments in general.

## Evaluating the Risks

Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. However, there is a duty on the Council to reduce the risk to as low as is ‘reasonably practicable’. This means balancing the level of risk against the trouble, time and money needed to control it. In some limited cases, there may be a benefit to having risk present (e.g. in school playgrounds), however, the risks and benefits need to be balanced.

The risk assessment should only include what can reasonably be expected to cause harm.

At this point, you should consider if it is possible to eliminate the hazard altogether. If not, consideration will need to be given as to how the hazard is, and should be, controlled.

The following steps should be followed:

* Involve and consult with workers involved in the planning and who carry out the tasks
* Trying a less risky option if possible
* Prevent access to the hazard until controls are agreed and documented
* Organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard
* Review welfare facilities such as first aid, washing facilities and toilets
* Issue personal protective equipment (PPE) as required, after all other controls are in place

These steps should be considered carefully to ensure that they will work in practice and won’t introduce new hazards into the workplace.

Controls measure need not be expensive but depend on the risk and possible short-term or long-term impact on staff and others for their health and safety. It should be remembered that the cost and consequences of some incidents, injury or ill-health events to anyone affected by work being carried out by Stirling Council is likely to cost considerably more if not managed appropriately from the start and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Careful consideration should be given where immediate ‘corrective’ measures are put in place or if required more robust, reliable ‘preventive’ controls are put in place. Remember, the greater the hazard the more robust and reliable the controls measures need to be, appropriate to the levels of risk presented.

## Record the Significant Risks/Findings

All risk assessments should be recorded on the Council template along with any safe working method and personal protective equipment required to carry out the task safely. These can all be accessed on the Risk Assessment Identification Process.

The Council uses a system for quantifying the Hazard and Likelihood where each is given a score out of 3 – 3x3 matrix:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hazard** | **H** | **Likelihood** | **L** |
| Severe | 3 | Definite | 3 |
| Moderate | 2 | Likely | 2 |
| Low | 1 | Unlikely | 1 |

The risks should be recorded in order of importance with the most serious risks first.

It is not necessary to record all possible risks, only the significant risks. These are risks that are not trivial in nature and are capable of creating a real risk to health and/or safety which any reasonable person would appreciate and would take steps to guard against. What can be considered as insignificant will vary from site to site and activity to activity depending on specific circumstances.

Please refer to the Health & Safety Executive FAQ’s Risk Management page for further guidance:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/faq.htm>

Where similar tasks are undertaken in different situations, it is possible to use a ‘model’ risk assessment as a basis to work from, but this **must** be reviewed to ensure that it is complete and appropriate for the specific situation/location for which it is being used. This also applies to model risk assessments provided by organisations such as trade associations, employers’ bodies or partnership agencies.

## Review

General Pre-Identified Risk Assessments require to be reviewed regularly to ensure they stay up to date.

As a minimum, this means that assessments should be reviewed:

* When new equipment, advances in technology, substances or working practices are introduced
* After an incident, near miss, ill-health, or adverse health surveillance result
* If legislation changes
* As per review date on assessment with a risk based focus on higher risk activities being reviewed more often that lower risk tasks and activities.

All General Pre-Identified Risk Assessments will be subject to document control procedures and held centrally on the appropriate system(s) to ensure all staff have access to them as required during their work. Service management teams must ensure staff who don’t have access to document systems because of their work locations or situation have up to date current copies for reference by staff in either electronically or paper based.

# Specific Risk Assessments

In addition to general risk assessments described above or where site specific risk assessment is required there are particular regulations which require more in-depth and specific assessments to be made in line with service provision.

Further guidance on these is contained within relevant Council policies.

These include:

* New and Expectant Mothers
* Young People
* Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)
* Manual Handling
* Fire
* Display Screen Equipment
* Noise
* Vibration
* School Excursions
* Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres

***Note:*** *This list is not exhaustive as specific clinical and social care risk assessments are also conducted within the Council.*

## Personal/Individual Risk Assessments

There may be times when a risk assessment is required for an individual, for example, when someone is returning to work following surgery or following assessment and request by our Occupational Health provider. This could also be used for service users who need an assessment to ensure their health and safety.

Similar principles should be used to carry out the assessment and the ‘Individual Risk Assessment Form’ as per the risk identification process should be used to record this.

A ‘Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan’ (PEEP) should also be considered and completed as required for staff, pupils or service users who may require one.

These forms/templates can be found within Council either on the Source H&S page <http://source.stirling.gov.uk/pages/h-s-policies> or document management system.

## Dynamic Risk Assessment

All foreseeable risks are required to be assessed using the process in Section 4. However, there will be situations where employees will come across a dynamic unforeseen situation in a worksite/location that does not fully fit an already formed, general existing risk assessment. This could be because of the worksite/location in which the work is being carried out, the behaviour of people involved in a task, or unexpected functioning of equipment, environmental conditions or substances being used.

In these situations, a ‘Dynamic Risk Assessment’ can be developed as required. Where possible, this should be written down at the time and agreed by line management/person in charge at worksite/location, but if not, should be written down and recorded as soon as possible afterwards and held in service for referral and discussion.

Regular Dynamic Risk Assessments for similar situations should not be required. If a situation is occurring regularly, it is foreseeable, and should be subject to a full risk assessment, however there may be occasions where information captured within a Dynamic Risk Assessment can be incorporated/added to an existing general pre-identified risk assessment to continually improve controls measures should additional hazards be identified.

On some occasions the dynamic risk assessment may be a ‘one off’ situation, therefore stands alone but on most occasions will be able to be incorporated in to existing assessments.

If any employee feels uncertain about any H&S hazards or risks they face in tasks they are asked to carry out, they should cease the task and report the matter to a line manager on or off site/location as soon as possible to discuss next reasonable steps to allow progression of the task in a safe and healthy manner.

# Record Retention

All general pre-identified risk assessments must be kept for three years after it is developed (i.e. current assessment, plus two previous years for existing assessments). These should be held centrally in a document control system accessible to all relevant employees.

# Guidance Review

This Guidance will be reviewed and modified as required. The review shall consider the findings of audits, the individual performance of each Service and the Council as a whole. Such review shall happen at least every 3 years.

**Note:** Review requirements and monitoring of Risk Assessments should be an action item of Service H&S Operational Plans.

This Guidance and any revision of it will be drawn to the attention of every Council employee. The contents of documents produced under this Guidance must also be drawn to the attention of relevant employees.

Participation by consultation with all appropriate parties including Trade Unions shall review and contribute any changes to be made to the Guidance.

# Communication of Assessments

Once Risk assessments are authorised and document controlled all direct line management are accountable to ensure that relevant staff are given the opportunity to read and review risk assessments. If additional persons (contractors, visitors etc) are involved they must also have all relevant Risk Assessments presented to them.

# Proof of Understanding by Employees

To provide proof of understanding all employees, or others affected by the task working to the risk assessment Guidance and associated assessments, should read, discuss and understand the Guidance and assessments individually or as a group with a line manager and complete the **Risk Assessment Sign Off-Assessment Register, Parts 1 & 2.**

**Part 1** is a register of Service Risk Assessments applicable to identified staff and **Part 2** is a sign off template to enable Line Managers to record the communication of Risk Assessments to service employees.

Service Line Managers must retain Part 1 & 2 in their services’ document control management process.

# Availability of Risk Assessments

Although authorised Risk Assessments are held centrally, they are also required to be readily available at the worksite by anyone involved in the work/procedure in progress. Line managers and Supervisors are accountable to their Service Managers that this is achieved.