CORPORATE GUIDANCE ON GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR) places an explicit duty on the Council to carry out an assessment of risks to the health and safety of all our employees and other persons who may be affected by our undertakings (e.g. clients, visitors, members of the public, contractors, pupils, agency staff, volunteers etc.).

The purpose of risk assessment is to enable the Council to identify hazards, evaluate the degree of risk and take appropriate measures to control that risk. In doing this the Council will not only comply with statutory provisions but also create a safe working environment.

This guidance explains the requirements of the MHSWR; the obligations and responsibilities that are placed on the Council and its managers; and sets out the arrangements for the implementation of the Council's policy on this matter.

Definitions

- **Hazard** – something (an object, activity or situation) with the potential to cause harm.

  There are two major **hazard** categories:

  (i) Safety hazards – capable of causing immediate physical injury (i.e. things that can hurt you)

  These are commonly broken down into sub-categories such as:

  - Slips, trips and falls;
  - Fire;
  - Electricity;
  - Environmental conditions;
  - Materials & substances;
  - Work equipment;
  - Work organisation including lone working etc.

  (ii) Health hazards – can cause occupational disease or ill-health conditions.

  These are often broken down into sub-categories such as:

  - Physical e.g. vibration, noise, etc.
  - Chemical e.g. lead, sulphuric acid, cement dust, etc.
  - Biological e.g. hepatitis B virus (HBV), legionella bacteria, etc.
  - Ergonomic e.g. repetitive movement, manual handling, etc.
  - Psychological e.g. stress and trauma

- **Harm** – harm is caused by an uncontrolled hazard. It can come in the form of death or injury to people but the term also includes damage and property loss e.g. to equipment or buildings. The severity of the harm can range from the minor to the very serious.

- **Risk** – the likelihood that a hazard will cause a specific harm. The degree of risk can be judged based on the likelihood of harm occurring in combination with the severity of the injury, damage or loss that might occur

- **Control Measure** – something which prevents or reduces risk i.e. precautions

- **Risk Assessment** – a careful examination of what, in your work activities or workplace could cause harm to you or anyone else, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or if you should do more to prevent harm.

Suitable and Sufficient

A suitable and sufficient risk assessment should identify the significant risks arising out of work and prevent any reasonably foreseeable, significant injuries and ill-health from occurring. In particular it should:

- Identify the significant risks arising out of the work. Trivial risks can usually be ignored as can risks arising from routine activities associated with life in general, unless the work activity compounds those risks, or there is evidence of significant relevance to the work activity.

- Consider all people potentially at risk, including visitors and contractors;

- Enable the employer to identify and prioritise the measures that must be taken to protect people from harm;

- Be appropriate to the nature of the work and remain valid for a reasonable period of time;

- Be proportionate to the risks identified

Who Can Carry out Risk Assessments?

To ensure a risk assessment is suitable and sufficient, it is important to have competent persons carrying out the process.

Managers and supervisors are able to undertake risk assessments as they are well placed to carry them out due to their familiarity with the tasks undertaken by their staff and the hazards to which people may be exposed.

A competent risk assessor should have sufficient knowledge and understanding of:

- the work involved and relevant current best practice;
- the principles of risk assessment, prevention and control; and
- general occupational health and safety

The assessor must also have an awareness of the limitations of their own experience and knowledge and a willingness and ability to supplement existing experience and knowledge.

They may also require specialist knowledge and training relating to specific work activities and hazards, depending on the work activities and workplace concerned.

What is the Manager's Role?

The Council requires all managers to ensure competent person(s) examine and assess all premises and areas under their control on a regular basis to identify significant risks to the health and safety of their staff and other persons and to take appropriate measures to ensure their health and safety.

The responsibility for assessment of "common" areas in buildings that are shared between Departments must be agreed between the local managers concerned.

Procedure for carrying out a Risk Assessment

Step 1 – Identify the Hazards

Seeking out and identifying hazards is an essential first step in the risk assessment process.

The identification of hazards should involve a critical appraisal of all activities in the work area, and therefore requires a thorough understanding of the working situation.

Managers should seek employee (and safety representatives) participation in the process as they can make a useful contribution to it.

In the simplest cases hazards can be identified by observation, and comparing the circumstances with relevant information.

There are various sources of information that might be used to identify hazards in a workplace to help inform part of the risk assessment process:

- Talk to employees
- Workplace inspection
- Job / Task analysis
- Independent safety audits
- Legislation and guidance
- Accident / incident data
- HSE guidance notes, approved codes of practice, website
- Manufacturers' & Suppliers guidance / product information / manuals
- Industry / Trade Association Guidance / Trade press
- British / European / International Standards
- Corporate Safety Section advice / website and Suppliers information

To simplify the process, hazards can be grouped into one of the following categories:

- **Chemical** e.g. cleaning materials, flammable
- **Biological** e.g. legionella, clinical waste.
- **Physical** e.g. trips and slips, workloads/work volumes, and violence.
- **Environmental** e.g. noise, pollution
- **Systems of work** e.g. poor lifting technique

In order to simplify assessments and prevent repetition, hazards may also be grouped together, e.g. instead of listing a trailing cable and loose carpet tiles as separate hazards they can both be covered under the category of 'slips, trips and falls'.

Where a hazard is identified which is also covered by its own very specific regulations (see example list below), it is sufficient under general risk assessment to identify that the hazard exists e.g. chemicals and provide a reference it to its own specific assessment form e.g. COSHH assessment).

Regulations covering specific risks:

- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended)
- Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002)
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Stage 2 – Identify the People at Risk

(i) When identifying people at risk, it is important to consider both those actually carrying out the activity **AND** anyone else who may be affected by the activity (otherwise known as our 'undertakings'). This could include:

- employees;
- clients;
- pupils / students;
- members of the public / visitors;
- suppliers of goods and services;
- contractors / agency staff / temporary staff
- volunteers
- emergency services personnel.

(ii) You must also identify those groups of workers defined in the MHSWR as being particularly at risk and carry out specific risk assessments for these individuals. These are:

- Young Persons;
- New & Expectant Mothers

(iii) You must also identify other groups who may also be at particular risk and ensure they are included in the assessment. These could include:

- Children
- Disabled
- Those with pre-existing health conditions

(iv) You must also consider whether any of the risks identified have the potential to extend beyond the workplace to form a hazard to any persons including employees and non-employees who are outside the workplace e.g. the spread of a chemical spillage into the drainage network; the release of asbestos dust into the atmosphere; effects of noise, etc.

(v) For each of the people or groups identified as at risk you must also consider how they could be harmed.

Stage 3 – Evaluate Risk & Decide on Precautions

In order to determine the risk rating both the potential severity and the likelihood must be given a numerical rating.

The process of establishing ratings is a matter of subjective judgement based on local knowledge; experience of the workplace and individual working practices; and must consider and take account of any existing control measures already in place.

In summary the process is as follows:

(i) For each **Hazard** list the existing control measures already in place

(ii) Taking the existing control measures into account identify the worst outcome or **Severity** of harm and assign a score

(iii) Identify the **Likelihood** for the hazard to materialise and harm to occur and assign a score

(iv) Multiply the **Severity x Likelihood** in order to obtain a **Risk Rating** and identify the level of risk

(v) Having identified the hazards and assessed the risk, you have to decide what to do about them. Is the level of risk generated by the hazard acceptable or does it need to be reduced? What more can be done to reduce the risk further?

To standardise the process, assessors should use the following values:

Potential Severity (i.e. the worst case outcome)

1 = Trivial / Negligible = hazard will not result in serious injury or illness, remote possibility of property damage.

2 = Minor Injury = hazard can cause injury, illness, or equipment damage but the results would not be expected to be serious.

3 = Serious Injury = hazard can result in serious injury and/or illness, property & equipment damage.

4 = Fatality / Major Injury = imminent danger exists, hazard capable of causing death and injury and/or illness on a wide scale.

Likelihood of occurrence

1 = Remote = unlikely, though conceivable.

2 = Possible = could occur sometimes

3 = Probable = not surprised, will occur in time

4 = Likely = likely to occur, event only to be expected

Risk Rating

The Risk Rating is determined simply by multiplying the potential severity score with the likelihood of occurrence score, or;

Potential Severity X Likelihood of Occurrence = RISK RATING

After these two numbers are multiplied together a Risk Rating score is obtained which allows risks to be compared, and action prioritised. These are as follows:

1 – 4 = Continue with existing controls and regular ongoing monitoring.

5 – 8 = Requires attention ASAP to reduce the rating and regular ongoing monitoring

9 – 12 = Requires immediate attention to bring the risk down to an acceptable level

13 – 16 = STOP! Why are you even considering doing this? The risk is too high and not acceptable

To make the computation work effectively, the likelihood of occurrence and severity must, be judged independently. A risk may be considered as negligible if it is highly unlikely to occur, **and** if the hazard is not serious and limited to a small number of persons.

The higher the number, the higher the risk!

Determining a Risk Rating allows ranking or classification of risks which further enables assessors and managers to:

- prioritise actions in planning safety management;
- assess which are the most serious problems so that resources can be allocated to deal with high risk areas; and,
- ensure that significant problems are not overlooked

Control Measures

Once a hazard has been identified, and the level of risk determined, it is then necessary to select the precautions necessary to control it to an acceptable level.

Where there is an unacceptable risk rating or the existing control measures are inadequate or need supplementing then additional/alternative control measures must be implemented.

This is the most important part of the risk assessment – identifying the further action that is needed and taking that action.

All protective and preventative measures (i.e. controls) must be identified in accordance with the 'The Principles of Prevention to be applied' set out in Schedule 1; Regulation 4 of the MHSWR.

These are generic principles, rather then prescriptive requirements, which should be applied wherever it is reasonable to do so. They must be addressed in their logical order from the top down, i.e. if you cannot eliminate, you must assess the remaining risk, then combat the hazards at source followed by adapting the work to the individual and so on.

Principles of Prevention

- Attempt to eliminate the hazard altogether if possible;
- Evaluate the risks that cannot be avoided;
- Combat hazards at source rather than undertaking cosmetic measures;
- Adapt work to the individual whenever possible if this is safer;
- Adapting to technical progress;
- Replacing the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous;
- Developing a coherent overall prevention policy;
- Give priority to safety measures affecting the greatest number of people; and,
- Ensure that staff understand what they have to do to operate safely and are properly trained in safe working practices

If additional control measures are to be implemented these must be listed in the **Action Plan** section clearly setting out the action required; the date by which it is required and the name of the person responsible for ensuring it is done.

Following the implementation of any additional control measures a re-assessment of the risk for each hazard must be undertaken and a revised risk rating calculated in order to determine if the risk has been reduced to an acceptable level which in the case of this process will require a residual risk score of 4 or below.

Any risk rating of 5 or above will mean that still further control measures are required and the process must continue until the risk is reduced.

Stage 5 – Recording & Reviewing the Risk Assessment

The Regulations require the ***significant findings*** of the assessment to be recorded. This record will normally be in writing, (however, it may be recorded by other means e.g. electronically). The general risk assessment form on page 11 should be used for ease of assessment and to ensure all risk assessments follow the same format.

Reviewing assessments

Risk assessment should be reviewed annually or sooner if there is any material change or for any reason they are no longer valid. Changes could be for any reason, for example:

- change in legislation;
- an accident occurs;
- a change in control measures;
- any significant changes in the work being carried out;
- changes to the staff carrying out the work;
- changes in where the work is carried out;
- changes to equipment or materials;
- use of different technology; or for any other reason
- the assessment is no longer believed to be valid or could be improved for any other reason.

Providing Information to employees

Manager must take action to provide staff with the “relevant” information from the assessment. This means providing information on points they need to know to assure their health & safety such as;

- the risks to their health and safety as identified by the assessment;
- the preventative and protective measures; and
- any emergency arrangements including the identity of staff nominated to assist in the event of evacuation.

The information must be capable of being understood by the employees to whom it is addressed. This must take account of their level of training knowledge and experience.

To ensure its accessibility consideration must be given to the way information relating to the assessment is given to **all** employees and anyone else affected by its content.

Staff should also be made aware of where they can view the assessment record in future if they should wish to do so.

Ensuring Co-operation and Co-ordination between Employers

Where the Council shares a workplace with another employer the LBM manager in control of the premises, and the other employer must liaise as far as is necessary and share relevant information relating to risk assessment and emergency procedures.

Managers have a responsibility to inform everyone working in the building, no matter how temporary, of any risks to their health and safety - i.e. contractors carrying out maintenance work.

The Department/Division/Section/Site/Service Area/School etc. placing the contract is responsible for informing contractors of all Health and Safety risks in the location that they are working. Equally, it shall be the responsibility of all contractors entering Council properties to undertake work, to identify the potential risks of their work and to inform the relevant council contract monitoring officer.

All contract monitoring officers should ensure that information on the risks attached to the work of all contractors, is passed on to any person who may be exposed to those risks.

Responsibilities for New & Expectant Mothers & Young Persons

The Council has always recognised the special responsibilities it has in assessing the risks to new and expectant mothers and young persons. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations places a duty on Employers to specifically assess and control risks to new and expectant mothers and young persons.

NOTE! There is specific guidance and assessment forms available from the Safety Section pages of both the LBM internet and intranet and these should be referred to and used when carrying out assessments for new & expectant mothers and young persons.

GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

ESTABLISHMENT:	ROOM / AREA:	ACTIVITY / SITUATION:

	HAZARDS IDENTIFIED	POPULATION WHICH MAY BE AFFECTED				POPULATION PARTICULARLY AT RISK			
		EMP	C/S	CON	V/P	CRN	YPS	NEM	DIS
1)									
2)									
3)									
4)									
5)									

EMP=Employee, **C/S** = Client / Student, **CON** = Contractor, **V/P** = Visitor / Public,
CRN = Children, **YPS** = Young Persons, **NEM** = New & Expectant Mothers, **DIS** = Disabled

	EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE (e.g. procedures, supervision, training, safety signs and information, PPE etc.)
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	

	POTENTIAL SEVERITY (Ě)				LIKELIHOOD (Ě) (taking existing control measures into consideration)				RISK RATING (Severity x Likelihood)	ACTION PLAN ADDITIONAL CONTROL MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED (if required)
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4		
1)										
2)										
3)										
4)										
5)										

ASSESSOR'S NAME:		Signature:	Date:

POTENTIAL SEVERITY: 1= **Trivial / Negligible** (hazard will not result in serious injury or illness, remote possibility of property damage); **2**= **Minor Injury** (hazard can cause injury, illness or equipment damage but the results would not be expected to be serious); **3**= **Serious Injury** (hazard can result in serious injury and/or illness, property & equipment damage); **4**= **Fatality / Major Injury** (imminent danger exists, hazard capable of causing death, injury and/or illness on a wide scale.

LIKELIHOOD: 1= **Remote** (unlikely, though conceivable); **2** = **Possible** (could occur sometimes); **3** = **Probable** (not surprised, will occur in time); **4** = **Likely** (likely to occur, event only to be expected).

(NB! Multiply POTENTIAL SEVERITY SCORE with LIKELIHOOD SCORE to give the RISK RATING)

RISK RATING: 1-4 = Continue with existing controls and regular ongoing monitoring; **5-8** = Requires attention ASAP to reduce rating and regular ongoing monitoring; **9-12** = Requires immediate attention to bring the risk down to an acceptable level; **13-16** = **STOP!** Why are you even considering doing this? The risk is too high and not acceptable.

RE-ASSESSMENT FOLLOWING IMPLEMENTATION OF ADDITIONAL CONTROL MEASURES

	POTENTIAL SEVERITY (Ě)				LIKELIHOOD (Ě) (taking additional control measures into consideration)				RISK RATING (Severity x Likelihood)	ADDITIONAL CONTROL MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED (if required)
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4		
1)										
2)										
3)										
4)										
5)										

ASSESSOR'S NAME:		Signature:	DATE:
MANAGER'S NAME:		Signature:	DATE:
REVIEW DATE:		1 year from the date of the last control measure to be implemented OR more frequently if required (SEE GUIDANCE)	