Risk Assessment

skillsforcare

Practical approaches to Risk Assessments

These recommendations cover the key principles that can be applied to various types of Risk Assessments. This information may be particularly useful to newer frontline managers and other staff who have limited experience of undertaking risk assessments.

This resource is complemented by Practical approaches to undertaking COVID-19 related Risk Assessments available separately.

Identify the risk	Use multiple methods to identify risks and as part of this asses the likelihood and impact of all risks however large or small. This may include: Care assessment and plans Daily care and support Incidents, near-misses Whistle blowing Trends and forecasting Complaints, claims and inquests Compliance/Internal audits Team meetings/1-2-1
Rate the risk before and after measures	Rate how likely a risk is to happen and what the impact would be if we did nothing to prevent it. Look at what preventative measures could be used to lower the original risk rating. Use action plans to ensure you can effectively manage the risk.
Take ownership of the risk	Everybody has a responsibility for managing immediate risk but ultimately managers are the owners of all risks and should ensure they are identi□ed, managed, and controlled.
Clearly de□ne other roles in risk management	In addition to the person owning the risk, consider the role of others in helping to manage the risk. This may include Health and Safety lead, Quality and Compliance, Nurses/ Senior care staff and care workers. Ensure each knows their role and responsibility, detailing it in your policy and procedures.
Provide training and support to build staff con□dence	Ensure that staff are trained and supported to effectively identify risks. Regularly review the con□dence of staff in supervisions and observations.
Avoid creating a risk-free culture	Remember nothing is ever going to be risk free – we don't live a risk-free life ourselves. Once the risks have been identi□ed and the possible control measures, a decision needs to be made as to which option is 'safe enough' – the key is to evidence this carefully.

Involve your people	Work closely with the people you support, their family and advocates to manage the risks whilst continuing to achieve the outcomes important to them. The people you support will often be central to identifying the risks and helping you to decide the control measures and mitigations.
Support positive risk taking	The person should be at the heart of the risk assessment – does the thing that is being risk assessed really matter to them? If so, we need to find a way to make it happen. When supporting people consider the benefits of positive risk taking. Our **Learning to live with risk guide** dates back to 2011 but incudes some key points to reflect on.
Look at risk as an enabler, not a barrier	Use a strengths-based approach. Work collaboratively, identifying the best way to manage the identified risks, maximising the benefits, and reducing the potential negative consequences. Use the resources from **DHSC** and **scie** to help.
Record decisions of choice and risk	Risk assessment is about a process not a form. It should not create a huge amount of extra paperwork, but it is essential that recording is clear, accurate and evidence based. An accurate record should always be kept of discussions that take place about areas of choice.
Ensure your approach is sensible and proportionate	Individual risk assessments should enable people to live meaningful lives and not restricting their freedoms. Putting in place sensible controls can reduce risk and enable you to agree a proportionate approach. Read more from the HSE **here**.
Group risk assessments	Group activities with people, families and staff can all help identify and plan effective ways to respond to risk. However, avoid introducing blanket measures that might impact individual freedoms.
Involve experts where needed	Where external expertise needed, involve others in helping you to identify and mitigate risk. This may include healthcare professionals, health and safety experts, local and national charities etc.
Utilise your peers across the sector	Connect with other services via Skills for Care's **Local networks for managers** and the national **Social Care Manager Facebook Group** to understand how they risk assess different challenges.
Record decisions of choice and risk	An accurate record should always be kept of discussions that take place about areas of choice. This will be critical to protect the person in making their choices, as well as the position of the provider of care in the event of any complaints or litigation.
Utilise technology to record and manage risk	Explore technical solutions and search online for electronic risk register options to enable your staff can easily access information and promptly update.

Consider the Risk Assessments that are needed	There are a wide range of Risk Assessments, with some of these varying between differing types of care services. There will be environmental risks (fire, electrical equipment, infection control), people risk (falls, scalding, medication), staff risks (expectant mothers and young workers). Compliance specialist **QCS** has produced an overview of a range of different risk assessment to consider and some practical template examples.
Ensure lone workers use dynamic risk assessments	Dynamic risk assessment is a practical tool for lone workers, enabling them to make quick decisions about safety and capably respond to unpredictable hazards they may experience. Read more in **Skills for Care's Supporting staff that regularly work alone guide**.
Regularly review your risk assessment process	Keep your risk assessment and associated policies and procedure under regular review. Learn from what is proving successful and look to build upon this to continually improve the processes you follow. Document improvements as evidence for CQC.
Horizon scan	Where possible, seek to identify future risks – this might be easier and more practical when considering environmental risks but potential possible for individuals too (e.g. deteriorating health).
Develop your skills	Skills for Care's recommended endorsed learning providers offer a range of training, including Risk Assessment. Contact those operating in your area **here** about how they can support you to develop further.
Review existing good practice and examples	Skills for Care's Good and outstanding care guide includes recommendations, practical examples and what to avoid in relation to Risk Assessment. Directly access the Risk Assessment section **here**.
Learn from mistakes	You might not always get it right but learn from mistakes to improve your risk assessment process. Use this free **Learning from Events** module to help.

Further information and advice about Risk Assessments is available:
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/COVID-19webinars