

**Personnel  
Advice &  
Solutions Ltd**

**COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**

**MAY 2021**

**How to Avoid Mistakes When Conducting Risk Assessments**

Many Councils are now seeing staff return to work who have either been home working, on Furlough Leave or shielding.

In order to accommodate either the public who are accessing your facilities following their opening, or vulnerable staff who are returning to work, Councils should be conducting risk assessment to identify any potential Covid dangers for these people.

Many Council staff will be involved in regular contact with the public, either in Receptions, Bars and Community Centres or Village Halls.

With this in mind, here are 11 tips based on the common mistakes Councils can make when compiling risk assessments.

**1. Make It Relevant to Those Who Matter Most**

Collaborate with other staff, particularly those who undertake the activity that is being assessed, to ensure you get relevant information. Risk assessment is not a singular effort. The views and opinions of Employees are essential. Risk Assessments can be conducted via Zoom/Teams with Employees before they return.

**2. Equip Staff Appropriately**

Those who complete risk assessment must be competent to do so. Competence can be defined as those with the necessary knowledge, ability, training and experience (KATE) to identify hazards and implement sensible, proportionate solutions.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance, can provide important knowledge and abilities for those with responsibility for conducting risk assessments. Risk assessor training packages are a great way to build competence within larger Councils, but may not be needed for smaller Town and Parish Councils.

### **3. Consider How A Person Could Be Infected.**

Quite often the terms of hazard and risk are confused. The hazard – something that has the potential to cause harm – must be identified separately and against it a description provided as to the risk of how somebody could come to harm. For example, failing to sanitise a facility is a hazard, and becoming infected leading to significant illness is the risk.

### **4. Reference Applicable Guidance**

Look at what is available from the HSE, and other expert organisations to ensure you are following industry best practice and, where appropriate, reference this on your risk assessment.

### **5. Cross Reference with Other Assessments**

Look at what already exists in your Council to prevent duplication and/or possible contradictory messages.

Avoid Generic, Ambiguous Terms. For example, ‘distancing’ and ‘PPE’. Instead use more precise distance measurements, for example 1m, and be explicit with the PPE to be worn and the standard of item (which is usually found within the item itself or in the manufacturers instructions). Similarly, be specific with your statements, for example. “A person will/must/shall use gloves/face masks.

### **6. Consider Likely Infection Points**

Any risk assessment tends to require consideration of:

- Access/egress
- Health monitoring/surveillance
- Maintenance and inspections
- Pre-use checks
- Safe systems of work for higher risk activities/tasks/equipment
- Training

It is important that our risk assessments, consider normal operating conditions, and non-routine activities such as maintenance, inspection and cleaning.

### **7. Communicate the Findings**

Communicate what you have found in your risk assessment to staff and obtain documented evidence that they have seen this using the most appropriate medium. A signed training record in the most straight forward option.

### **8. Review Risk Assessments Often**

Ensure it is reviewed at least annually or whenever there is a change that causes you to believe it may no longer be suitable and sufficient such as reopening after lockdown. A positive test result at work should require you to review the adequacy of any relevant risk assessments.

### **9. Have an Index in Place**

This should list all assessments and the dates reviews are required to provide a quick reference guide. Ensure you stick to these dates.

#### **10. Refine General Risk Assessments**

You may choose to create general risk assessment that reflect certain activities that are common throughout the Council and across other sites. This is a good starting point, but make sure the recipients of such risk assessments modify them if necessary, so that they are specific and reflect conditions onsite.

#### **11. Relieve the Stress of Risk Assessment**

There are numerous tools and plenty of advice available to simplify risk assessments and help you stay compliant. The HSE website is a rich seam of information.

If you are in any doubt about how to conduct a risk assessment fit for your specific Council, you should contact a qualified health and safety practitioner.

#### **PROFILE**

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