

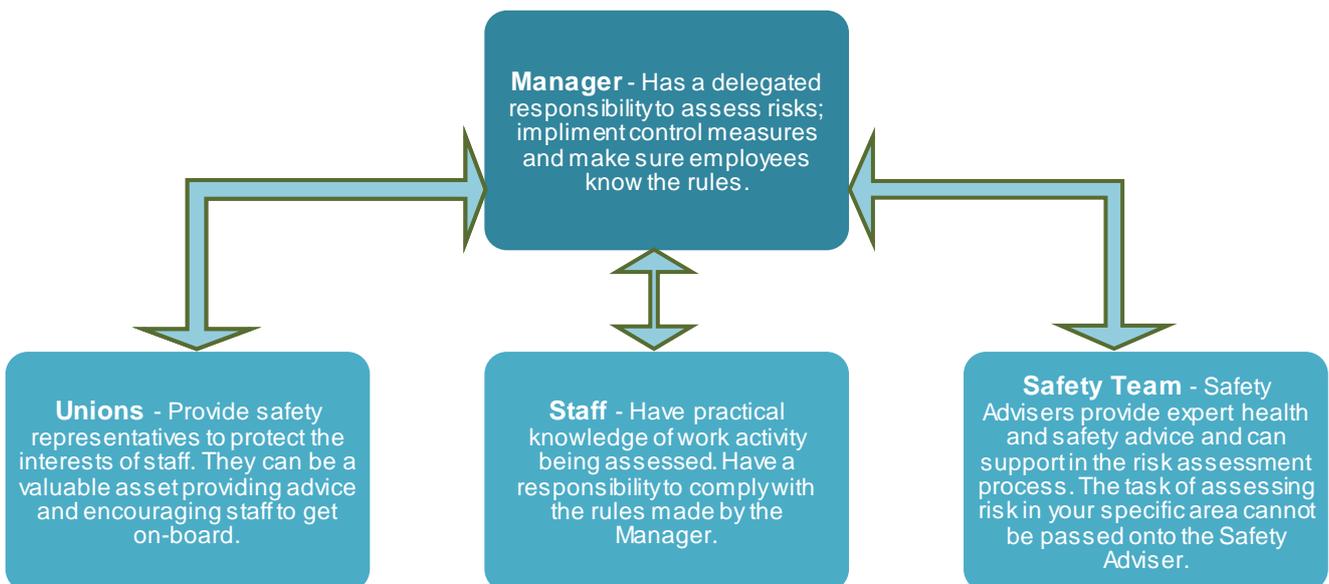
Manager Guidance RISK ASSESSMENT

Assessing risk is something we do every day without realising, “Is it safe to cross the road now or would it be safer to cross when that truck has gone?” In the workplace a risk assessment is a management tool which helps you, as the manager, to take a critical look at the work your staff undertake and to identify where there are potential risks to their health, or where they may be harmed/injured. It is designed to help you organise your thoughts so that you can easily identify what you already have in place, what you need and where additional protection may be needed.

- ▶ It is the first step in good health and safety management.
- ▶ It must identify the **SIGNIFICANT** risks, don't be tempted to get caught up in trivial risks.
- ▶ Your control measures must be an accurate reflection of what is happening not a list of what you think or wish is happening as, should the worst happen you will be measured against what you have said you have in place.
- ▶ In addition to employees, it must consider who might be harmed, especially those with special requirements such as:
 - Young people
 - Pregnant and nursing mothers
 - Disabled people
 - Service users and the general public
- ▶ A risk assessment in itself will not protect you. It is only a piece of paper unless you use it properly. It is the thought process behind the risk assessment and what you then do with the information that is important, not the fact that you are the proud owner of a completed form.

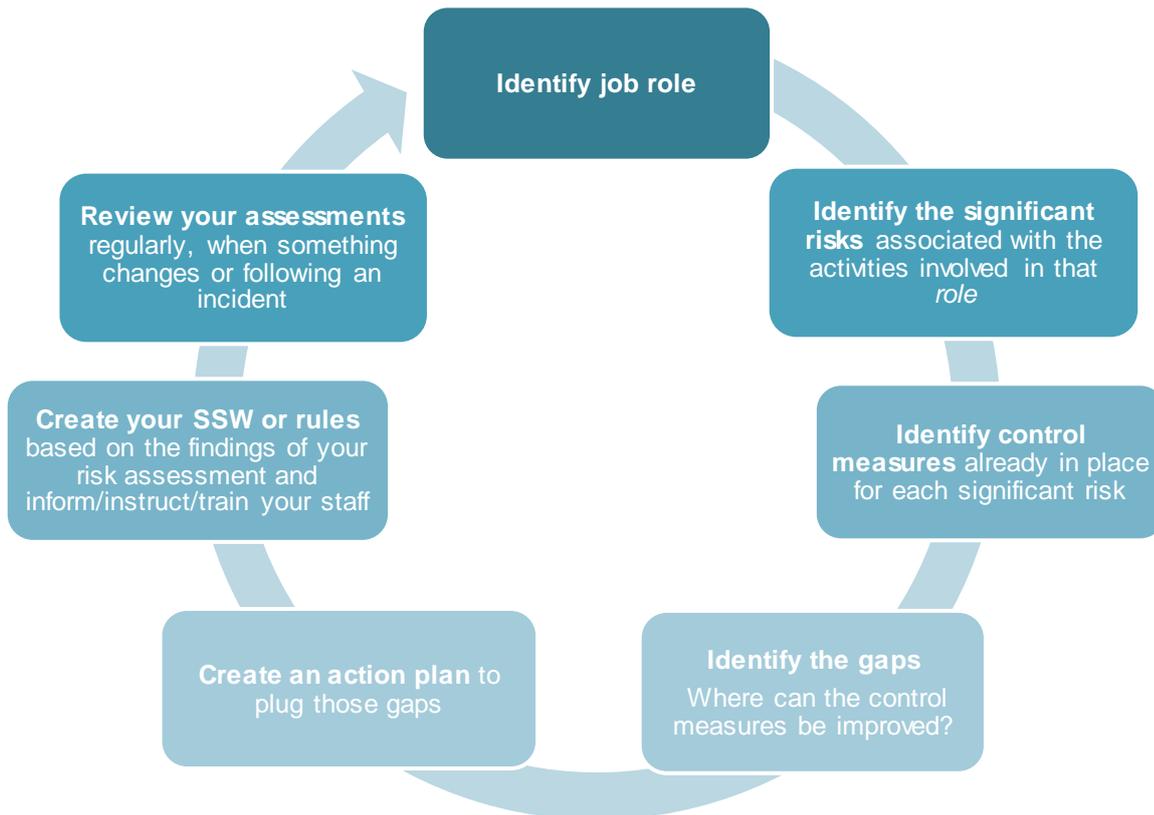
Completing the Risk Assessment

Whilst the Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Council complies with legislation, in Rochdale MBC the responsibility for assessing risks and ensuring appropriate control measures are put in place is delegated to Heads of Service and Senior Managers, who may in turn delegate an appropriate person to work with staff actually performing the tasks.



- Remember that you cannot do a risk assessment from your desk, you need to physically see what your staff do in the real world, otherwise your risk assessment will only be a representation of what you think is happening.
- Whilst it is the manager's responsibility to complete the risk assessment, you should get your staff involved with the process. They are a valuable asset, have hands on experience and can give you a very real indication of what will or won't work. Asking their opinion will help get them on board; give them some ownership and make the task of implementing rules much easier in the long run.

Risk Assessment Cycle



Identify the job role

A good risk assessment is used to identify the significant risks only. You cannot eliminate risk altogether and you should not try or your risk assessment will become impractical and unwieldy.

- Keep it simple; remember that this is a record of your thought process. Bullet points will suffice; you don't need a complex matrix.
- Make it job specific rather than task based, for example, "Librarian" rather than "working with the public" or "filing books". This will cut down on duplication and help you avoid missing anything. It will also give you an overview of what is involved in an employee's role helping identify such risks as high noise levels.

Identify the significant risks

List all the significant risks associated with the job role. Here are some examples of the kind of hazards you should consider. This list is not exhaustive, there may be other hazards you have identified that are not listed here and some examples won't apply to you.

The working environment:

- Heights or confined spaces
- Noise levels
- Construction or excavation sites
- Working on or near water or highways
- Welfare facilities
- Working alone in hazardous conditions
- Severe weather conditions

• People:

- Dealing with the public
- Home visits to service users
- Violence and aggression
- Lifting and handling people

• Substances (A separate COSHH assessment may be needed):

- Chemical or biological agents
- Gas systems or fumes/dust
- Radioactive sources
- Asbestos
- Food
- Sharps

Plant and equipment:

- Hand tools, and machinery
- Operating plants
- The use of fork-lift trucks
- Driving
- Computers/DSE assessments
- Hot works
- Electrical equipment
- Compressed air/gases
- Portable power tools
- Abrasive wheels/ chainsaws/brush cutters

• Working methods:

- Work-related stress
- Animals
- Handling cash
- Lifting/handling/carrying objects

Remember that you will not need to consider all these hazards. When considering the hazards faced by an office worker, for example, it is unlikely that working in a confined space or working with power tools would need to be considered but DSE assessment would. In addition, whilst weather conditions may be a consideration for many job roles, you would only include it if it is a significant risk. For example, walking from a car to a building in the rain would not be considered a significant risk but tree work in high winds would be.

Identify your control measures

Once you have identified the significant risks you must then go on to identifying the control measures you already have in place.

Think about your control measures; are they reasonably practicable? In other words, do the control measures you would need to put into place outweigh the risks? If they do then you have either taken the control too far and are in danger of over-protecting your employee, or the risk may not have been significant in the first place. Re-visit the risk and decide which it is.

► Make sure you consider:

- **Training**- have you identified the training requirements for the role? Remember that some tasks will need specific professional training. Make sure any training is recorded. (See *guidance on training for further information.*)
- **Hazardous substances** (COSHH) – Have you got separate COSHH risk assessments where appropriate? (See *guidance on COSHH risk assessments for further information.*)
- **Personal Protective Equipment** (PPE) – Is the appropriate protection provided and in use? (See *guidance on Personal Protective Equipment for further information.*)
- **Safety Procedures** or rules will sit behind the risk assessment. These will be for activities that are less hazardous but where employees still need to know the “dos & don’ts” and might include the use of PPE and emergency procedures etc.
- Where an activity has been identified as a high hazard then **Safe Systems of Work** (SSW) sit behind your risk assessments. It is the SSWs that your staff need to know. (See *Safe Systems of Work guidance for further information.*)
- **Health Surveillance** – You must consider if health surveillance is required and how this is managed, for example, do employees use vibrating tools or are they subjected to loud noises? Are they perhaps exposed to hazardous substances? Check to see if the job role includes activities that will require regular surveillance to ensure their health is not affected by their work activities. (See *guidance on Health Surveillance for further information.*)
- **Maintenance** – Is equipment properly used and maintained in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions? Is maintenance carried out by a competent person (usually a recognised company) and are maintenance records kept?
- **First aid provision** – Are employees working remotely able to access first aid/assistance should the need arise?
- **Emergency procedures** – What actions will you take should an emergency arise? (See *guidance on emergency planning for further information.*)

Remember that you are acknowledging that these control measures are in place, not creating them within your risk assessment.

Identify the gaps

Now look critically at your risk assessment. Where are the gaps and what could be improved on? You need to be honest; don’t worry if you find yourself with a longer list than you expected, or if you don’t know what the solution is, this will form the basis of your action plan.

Create an action plan

A risk assessment should be a working document and never left on the shelf to gather dust. Look at the gaps in the control measures and:

- Form an action plan with appropriate timescales. Be realistic, it is better to think solutions through and be sure that anything you put in place won’t have an adverse impact elsewhere creating a fresh hazard.
- Prioritise your action plan. No-one can realistically be expected to do everything at once. Pick out those control measures that are most important and also those that can be done immediately with little or no cost or effort. Don’t forget the medium and low rated tasks however, they might not need to be done immediately but still need to be done.
- Allocate tasks to other members of the team. No one should be left with the sole responsibility for ensuring safety. Remember to fit the task to the person with the right skill sets otherwise the result is likely to be unsatisfactory for all concerned.

- Inform your staff of the findings of the risk assessments. They need to know about the areas they can affect and what is expected of them.
- Where your risk assessment indicates a need, arrange for appropriate training and record it on personnel records and a training/skills matrix.

Create your safe system of work

In many risk assessments, particularly where the job role involves more hazardous processes, you will have stated that, as a control measure, you have safe systems of work or safe working procedures. These, rather than the risk assessment, are what you need your employee to be familiar with. These are the rules informing how each hazardous task is performed safely. All rules, logs, records and working practices sit apart from the risk assessment document but they **MUST** exist if you have identified them as a control measure. *(See guidance on Safe Systems of Work for further information.)*

And Finally...

Review your assessments

A good risk assessment is never finished; it is an on-going process. You should monitor that your control measures are working and that everyone is adhering to them. You should, therefore, review your risk assessments:

- ▶ Regularly. Rochdale MBC suggest every year or
 - When something changes such as the introduction of new technology/equipment; new substance; a change in way a job is done; or a change of key personnel. This includes a reduction of the number of staff available to perform a task.
 - Following an incident/accident, dangerous occurrence or work related ill-health. An investigation will tell you what went wrong and why. You will need to re-visit your risk assessments to make sure it doesn't happen again.
- ▶ Date your risk assessments so that you can easily identify any that need to be reviewed and so that it can be seen that you have made a commitment to working safely.

Remember that creating a risk assessment is not the end of your task, it is just the beginning.

Additional information

Risk assessment form
 Working with hazardous substances
 Corporate Safety Policy

If you need any further information or advice on a health and safety matter, or require this document in an alternative format, the Safety Team can be contacted on 01706 92 5615 / 5060.