

A GUIDE TO RISK ASSESSMENT FOR EMPLOYERS PROVIDING PLACEMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON WORK EXPERIENCE

What is 'Risk Assessment'?

Undertaking a risk assessment is not an end product, it is nothing more than a tool to undertake a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people so that you can establish whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

Employers are required to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of any activity that is likely to be hazardous to the health of those affected by their business activities.

When there are 5 or more employees, the significant findings of the risk assessment must be recorded and, if necessary, remedial action must be taken to eliminate or reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Hazard:

A Hazard is something that has the potential to cause harm.

Almost anything can be a hazard, for example, weights, machines, electricity, fire, noise, tools and chemicals. Hazards can also be living organisms such as, animals, bacteria, viruses, people, insects or ways of working for example, at height, confined spaces, lifting and typing. Ways of working also vary in how serious a hazard they are, e.g. short spells of lifting are less hazardous than long spells.

Risk:

Risk can be identified as the likelihood of harm or injury arising from a hazard.

Risks occur when hazards and a person come together in circumstances, which could result in harm to the person.

The level of the risk depends on how severe the harm could be, and how likely it is harm will occur.

Examples of Hazards and the associated Risks include:

Hazard	Risk
Handling of chemical substances	Exposure to the chemicals
Walking on floor surfaces	Slips, trips and falls
Climbing up or down ladders etc.	Falling from or collapse of the ladder
Operating an abrasive wheel	Contact with, or explosion, of the wheel
Use of electrical equipment	Electric shocks or burns

The Importance of Risk Assessment:

The need for a risk assessment from a criminal law perspective is well documented and the following gives an example of the breach of such law. It should also be remembered that proof of risk assessments might also be required from a civil law perspective.

A good risk assessment procedure may initially prove expensive but it has been established that over the long term it may reduce costs for the organisation by reducing lost time, increasing productivity and the life expectancy of equipment.

Failing to carry out an adequate risk assessment is often a factor in many accidents. An example case is given below:

Example - A 15-year-old girl had her left index finger amputated at the first knuckle when using an unguarded Indexing Machine.

Failings - No risk assessment had been undertaken that took account of the girl's young age. Safety guard had been removed for ease of use.

Breaches Involved - Provision of Use of Work Place Equipment 1998, Management of Health & safety at Work Regulations 1992

Outcome - Company fined £3,000 in the Magistrates Court.

Legal Responsibilities:

Employers and the self-employed have a responsibility under section 2 of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by their work activities.

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 further impose a specific duty upon employers to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of all risks to the health & safety of employees and others, arising from a work activity.

Identifying People at Risk:

Risk assessments must also consider all those who might be affected by the undertaking, whether they are workers or others such as members of the public. For example:

Person at Risk	Description
Lone Workers	Those that are not under immediate supervision.
Contractors	Those that are undertaking work on your premises or staff from your organisation who are undertaking work for someone else.
Temporary Workers	Staff who may be undertaking work on a short-term contract or <i>work experience</i> .
Home Workers	It is becoming a common practice for some members of staff to be based at home.
Volunteers	A duty of care is still owed regardless of payment, e.g. charity shops etc.
Visiting Members of the Public	Shoppers, clients or passers by.
Trespassers	A duty is still owed even if they have not been invited or their intentions are illegal.
Inexperienced Workers	Particularly young people who may not have sufficient experience or awareness of existing or potential risks or the fact that a young person may not yet be fully matured.
Members of Staff who may not be Directly Affected	Routine and non-routine activities such as, office staff, cleaners, maintenance staff, security guards
New and Expectant Mothers	Some aspects of the tasks such as manual handling or use of certain substances may affect new or unborn babies and their mothers
Individual Capabilities	Some persons such as persons with disabilities, learning difficulties or certain medical conditions may find certain tasks difficult.

Young Persons Risk Assessment Example:

Tasks to be Undertaken	Hazards	Details of Risk	Control Measures
Removing stock from shelves.	Climbing up & down ladders.	Falling from height, collapse of ladder.	Training, securing ladder, equipment safety check, limiting working height.

This guidance note is issued to assist employers who have not Risk Assessed their business prior to accepting Young People on Work Experience placements and should be used in conjunction with the Young Persons Risk Assessment form left by the Work.