



Staffordshire
Social Care
Workforce

CMDT
Care Market Development Team

Risk Assessment Guide

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Foreword

This guide has been developed to introduce the subject and further research and learning is recommended to provide a complete understanding. Requirements are often unique to individual care services, and you should consider how best to implement practices.

Introduction

Risk assessments should follow a process of identifying, analysing, and evaluating potential risks to an individual's health, safety, and well-being. The goal of a risk assessment is not to eliminate all risks but to manage them in a way that respects the individual's autonomy and enhances their overall well-being. The process should be dynamic, responsive, and focused on continuous improvement.

This guide will focus on risks relating to people in receipt of care.

Identification

Identification is the first step of risk assessment, where potential hazards and sources of harm are identified and documented. Identification can be done by observing the individual's environment, activities, health conditions, preferences, and needs, as well as consulting with relevant stakeholders, such as family members, carers, or health professionals.

The individual should be at the heart of the risk assessment and a conversation should take place to understand what they consider to be risks. When a care plan is created or reviewed is an ideal time to have these conversations, or when a near miss has occurred.

A non-exhaustive list of examples of risk that could affect someone:

- susceptibility to pressure ulcers or skin infections
- communication difficulties, or cognitive impairment resulting in not asking for support for essential care needs
- smoking and use of matches or lighters
- various reasons that could increase the risk of a fall
- violence, behaviours, aggression, or conflict between people
- taking part in food preparation and cooking
- accessing the community, for example going shopping

Assessment

Assessment is the next step in the risk assessment process, where the probability and impact of identified risks are evaluated. This involves considering the potential consequences of each risk, the likelihood of it occurring, and the impact it could have on the individual or others.

The assessment should consider the individual's personal circumstances, such as their age, health, and abilities, as well as any existing control measures or safeguards that are in place. The outcome should inform the development of a risk assessment, which outlines the actions that will be taken to prevent or mitigate the risks.

The assessment should be focused on supporting the individual to live a full and fulfilling life, managing risks but giving them the opportunity to take balanced risks.

Risk Matrix

A risk matrix can be utilised to understand the level of risk, by looking at the probability of the risk occurring, and the impact should it occur. This can also help to visualise the risk as focus can sometimes be focused on just the impact.

When assessing the risk, it should be considered from the point of view of no measures being put in place to understand how the individual could be affected.

		Impact				
		Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Significant 3	Major 4	Severe 5
Probability	Certain 5	Medium 5	High 10	Very high 15	Extreme 20	Extreme 25
	Likely 4	Low 4	Medium 8	High 12	Very high 16	Extreme 20
	Moderate 3	Low 3	Medium 6	Medium 9	High 12	Very high 15
	Unlikely 2	Very low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	Medium 8	High 10
	Rare 1	Very low 1	Very low 2	Low 3	Low 4	Medium 5

Prevention

Prevention is the next step in the risk assessment process, where measures are put in place to reduce the likelihood and severity of identified risks. Prevention should focus on reducing risk, while acknowledging that risk can very rarely be completely removed.

The risk assessment should put the person at the centre of the process, including their views and preferences in the development of a risk management plan.

Prevention measures can include changes to the environment, equipment, or procedures, as well as training, supervision, or support for the individual or staff. Prevention should be an ongoing process, with regular reviews and updates to ensure that the measures remain effective and relevant.

While risk prevention can reduce the likelihood and impact of the risk occurring, there can remain a degree of risk. It might only be possible to reduce the probability but the impact might remain the same, or the reverse could be true where the impact could be reduced but the probability remains unchanged.

People are able to choose to do something that could increase their chances of risk and as long as they are able to comprehend those risks, it is their decision.

Clearly communicating the risk assessment to people involved in the delivery of care is essential to ensuring that the people who are responsible are managing the risk are aware of what they should be doing.

Example

An individual wants to help in the kitchen with preparing meals, but they have limited dexterity, and their eyesight is poor.

Prior to risk assessment measures

They would be put at major risk should they be involved in many of the kitchen tasks, such as utilising knives to chop vegetables.



After implementing risk assessment measures

A member of staff will always support the individual in the kitchen, ensuring kitchen staff are free to continue with their routines. They will be supported with tasks that are safe such as preparing food that doesn't require sharp implements.



Review

Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain relevant and effective. The frequency of reviews may vary depending on the individual's circumstances and the level of risk involved.

Risk assessments should be reviewed monthly or whenever there is a significant change in the individual's circumstances, such as a change in their health, mobility, or living arrangements.

Reviews should be carried out by a competent person, such as a care manager or health and safety officer, in consultation with the individual and their family or carers. The review should involve reassessing the risks and evaluating the effectiveness of existing control measures. If necessary, the risk assessment should be updated to reflect any changes in the individual's circumstances or to address any new risks that have been identified.

In the event of a near miss or an incident (also known as an accident), the risk assessment should be reviewed immediately to determine if any changes are needed to prevent a similar incident from occurring in the future. The review should also consider if any additional training, supervision, or support is needed for the individual or staff to ensure their safety and well-being.

Involving the individual in the review process is crucial, as it ensures that their views and preferences are considered when making decisions about their care and support. This can help to promote their autonomy and enhance their overall well-being.

Summary

Risk assessments are essential tools for ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals who receive adult social care services. They involve identifying and evaluating the potential hazards and risks that may arise from the individual's needs, preferences, environment, or activities, and taking steps to reduce or eliminate them as much as possible.

Risk assessments should be person-centred, meaning that they respect the individual's rights, dignity, and choices, and involve them in the process of assessing and managing risks. Risk assessments should also be dynamic, meaning that they are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any changes in the individual's circumstances, needs, or outcomes.

A risk assessment should not be seen as a one-off exercise, but rather as an ongoing part of the care and support planning process.

For further information,
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