



# Risk Assessment Policy

## SETTING THE POLICY STATUS

1. This is the Council's corporate policy on health and safety, H&S, risk assessment. It is supported by guidance for managers and links into our corporate H&S Policy Statement of Intent and other key policies.
2. All corporate H&S policy and guidance documents are available on the:
  - Council's intranet. To find them from the homepage go to Health and Safety and choose Policies and Guidance.
  - schools' pages on the Council's website.
3. You can also get copies from the Corporate Health and Safety Team, CHST. Managers with employees who can't access the intranet or the web must set up alternative arrangements to make sure they get appropriate H&S information. This might be by printing information off and circulating it or handing out copies at team meetings.
4. The policy sets minimum standards that **all** stakeholders must meet. This includes:
  - directors
  - managers. This means anyone who has responsibility for managing employees, including school-based staff
  - employees
  - health and safety representatives
  - the Corporate Health and Safety Team, CHST.
5. Directorates can adopt higher standards and adapt the guidance that supports this policy to meet their operational needs and arrangements.

## DEMONSTRATING COMMITMENT

6. The Council is committed to protecting its employees' health, safety and well-being. We believe that the best way to do this is through a proactive health and safety management system based on risk assessment.
7. The Council is committed to meeting its legal obligation to do 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments for **all** work activities.

## **ASSURING MINIMUM STANDARDS**

8. We will base our approach to risk assessment on the requirements of current law and the latest guidance from the Health and Safety Executive, HSE. This means that directorate arrangements for risk assessment must:
- identify the hazards linked to work activities and premises
  - identify who might be harmed and how that could happen
  - evaluate the risk of harm occurring and the effectiveness of existing precautions
  - make sure positive action is taken to deal with any risks identified
  - record the significant findings of risk assessments and use them to devise clear written safe working procedures
  - make sure assessments are reviewed regularly, and revised when necessary
  - monitor preventative measures to make sure they're effective and take urgent steps to improve them if they're not
  - provide clear information for employees
  - provide training, instruction and supervision for employees
  - encourage employees and their health and safety representatives to be actively involved
  - involve the Occupational Health Service when appropriate. This is to make sure health risks are adequately covered, and health surveillance programmes can be set up when necessary.

## **DEFINING RESPONSIBILITIES**

9. Policies only work when they make things happen. It helps if everyone's clear about what they need to do...

### **Directors**

10. Directors and their senior management teams are responsible for making sure their directorate meets the requirements of this policy. This means they must:
- oversee the development and implementation of directorate arrangements and action plans
  - make sure risk assessments are used to help shape business planning processes, and resources are prioritised for risk management
  - show their positive and visible commitment to risk assessment
  - actively check that their managers do risk assessments and monitor the results.

### **Managers**

11. The Council believes that risk assessment is a key management responsibility of equal importance with other business activities. Managers should have the detailed knowledge of their employees, workplaces and activities that is vital for the risk assessment process.

12. Managers are responsible for:

- doing risk assessments for the activities they control, in consultation with their employees
- devising, implementing and reviewing safe working procedures
- monitoring health and safety performance by doing regular workplace inspections, spot checks and audits
- identifying their employees' health and safety training needs through training needs analysis, risk assessment and task monitoring.

### **Officers who procure goods, commission or specify work**

13. Officers have risk assessment duties if they:

- procure goods or services on behalf of the Council. This might include products such as furniture, work equipment, or cleaning products and services provided by volunteers or agency workers.
- design work for others to do
- specify how a task has to be done, the materials, substances or equipment to be used
- commission work from contractors.

14. These duties include:

- making sure products and services meet H&S standards
- assessing the risks linked to their designs, instructions or specifications **before** they're finalised
- adjusting their designs, instructions or specifications after their assessment to eliminate or reduce risks
- passing their findings, especially details of any residual risks, to the person or contractor doing the work
- working with contractors to develop risk assessments and preventative measures for contracted work.

### **Corporate Health and Safety Team, CHST**

15. This team's responsibilities include:

- developing and reviewing corporate policy, standards and guidance on risk assessment
- providing a corporate overview and strategic guidance
- monitoring and reporting on corporate performance for risk assessment
- auditing and reviewing directorate risk assessment arrangements, as part of the Council's health and safety management system
- identifying any trends or problems that require a corporate response
- providing specialist advice on occupational health, safety and welfare issues
- helping directorates to develop the arrangements and guidance they need to implement this policy
- assisting with implementation action plans
- taking part in the consultation and approval processes for directorate arrangements and plans
- checking that arrangements are implemented and assessments done

- monitoring the standard of assessments and the effectiveness of protective measures
- reporting progress and problems through the appropriate management system. This may include the directorate management team or the Corporate Health and Safety Committee, CHSC
- facilitating and monitoring employees' risk assessment training
- giving support, advice and information to managers, employees and health and safety representatives.

### **Employees**

16. Employees have a legal right to be consulted about work-related risks and the protective measures in place to deal with them. The Council believes that employees' knowledge of work tasks is vital to make sure:
- risk assessments are realistic and complete
  - protective measures are practical and effective
  - any problems are identified and dealt with quickly.
17. Employees have responsibilities as well as rights. These include:
- reporting any hazards, risks or unsafe situations they identify at work
  - being co-operative and proactive in all health and safety issues
  - reporting any problems or shortcomings in the Council's health and safety arrangements. This includes any concerns they have about risk assessment.

### **Trade union health and safety representatives, HSRs**

18. HSRs have legal rights in the workplace. These include the right to:
- inspect and take copies of any documents linked to health and safety in the workplace, including risk assessments
  - be consulted about any planned changes that could affect their members' health and safety
  - monitor and review risk assessments, policies and departmental arrangements
  - investigate hazards, accidents and their members' complaints
  - do inspections.

### **PROGRESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP**

19. The Council recognises that a co-operative partnership approach between **all** stakeholders is essential for effective risk management. Managers have the primary responsibility for getting risk assessments done. They **must** work together with employees and their HSRs throughout the risk assessment process.

20. Managers need the support of other stakeholders to help them. This will include:
- backing and financial support from Directors
  - help and co-operation from employees
  - advice and support from HSRs
  - information and guidance from occupational health, safety and welfare specialists.

## **SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

21. We need to check that the policy is working, and that the minimum standards it sets are being met across the Council. If things aren't going well, we need to know why, so action can be taken. Our aim is for work activities to be as safe and healthy as possible.
22. To do this, we will use a range of monitoring arrangements and performance indicators dovetailed into our health and safety management system. These arrangements will include:
- **reviewing and updating policy and guidance regularly.** The CHST will aim to do this annually, or whenever there are significant changes to the law or HSE guidance or best practice.
  - **making sure minimum standards are applied consistently.** The CHST monitors standards as part of its ongoing directorate and corporate work plans. We also expect managers to monitor H&S standards as part of their general management activities.
  - **monitoring the progress of H&S objectives and tasks against agreed timescales.** H&S is now a mandatory element in all directorate business plans. This means that progress is monitored and reviewed through directorate management and performance management processes.
  - **carrying out a planned programme of inspections and audits.** The CHST develops and implements an agreed annual programme of inspections and audits. Managers must agree appropriate H&S monitoring arrangements with their Head of Service or Service Director, and then implement them effectively.
  - **producing H&S performance reports.** The CHST will continue to develop and publish a range of corporate and directorate reports describing H&S performance. We will expect managers to report their H&S monitoring activities and performance to their management team and H&S adviser
  - **benchmarking our H&S performance against suitable comparator organisations.** We will continue to take part in a Local Authority benchmarking group and look at ways of developing this further.

## EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES THROUGH TRAINING

23. The Council has a legal duty to provide suitable health and safety training for its employees. More details can be found in the corporate H&S Training Policy. The CHST run a programme of corporate training sessions, which includes risk assessment courses. We've also developed an e-learning course which covers this subject.
24. Directorates are responsible for:
- identifying which employees need training
  - making sure all employees attend appropriate training sessions within reasonable timescales.

### **Managers' risk assessment training**

25. **All** managers must develop the necessary skills and knowledge they need to do risk assessments competently. Risk assessment training is mandatory for all managers and must be a priority for employees who are new to a management role. Whenever possible, this should be **within six months** of their appointment or promotion. All managers must receive refresher training every three years.

### **Employees' risk awareness training**

26. **All employees'** induction training must include general risk awareness and risk management. They must also be trained in the specific safe working procedures and precautionary measures they must follow to protect them from work-related hazards.