



Manual Handling Policy and Managers' Guidance

SETTING THE POLICY STATUS

1. This is the Council's corporate policy on manual handling. It aims to make sure our arrangements for any work activities involving manual handling tasks meet legal and best practice standards. 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
 - trade union health and safety representatives
 - employees
 - occupational health and safety advisers.
2. All corporate health and safety, 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

Directorate arrangements

4. Directorates are responsible for formally adopting this policy and for devising arrangements to implement it. Their written arrangements must include:
 - details of employees with specific responsibilities for planning, assessing and managing manual handling tasks
 - systems for providing and evaluating employee training
 - processes for communicating and coordinating risk assessment and risk control information.

Directorates can adopt higher standards and adapt the guidance that supports this policy to meet their operational needs and arrangements.

Approval

5. Directorate arrangements and guidance must go through the Council's normal consultation process. They must be approved by the:
- directorate management team
 - directorate Joint Consultative Committee, JCC
 - Head of Corporate Health and Safety.

DEMONSTRATING COMMITMENT

6. We are committed to protecting our employees' health, safety and well being. We will make sure all essential manual handling tasks are designed to be as safe as is reasonably practical. If general risk assessments highlight problems with manual handling tasks, we will follow the requirements of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, as amended in 2002. This means that we will:
- identify hazardous manual handling tasks
 - always aim to avoid these tasks, so far as is reasonably practicable
 - assess those tasks that can't be avoided and keep written records
 - take positive action to reduce the risk of injury to the lowest level reasonably practicable
 - provide training for employees
 - provide adequate supervision to make sure employees can get help and advice while carrying out manual handling tasks
 - make sure risk assessments are used to draw up written safe working procedures that are relevant to individual work situations and tasks
 - make sure employees and their representatives are actively involved in the risk assessment process
 - provide employees with details of the type and variety of loads they may handle
 - make sure assessments are reviewed regularly and revised if jobs or tasks change
 - monitor preventative measures to make sure they're effective and take urgent steps to improve them if they're not.

PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE

7. In the spirit of best practice, we'll also:
- follow an ergonomic approach to manual handling assessments. This means considering:
 - the task
 - the load
 - the environment
 - employees' individual capabilities.

We'll try to make sure the task is fitted to the individual, rather than expecting them to adapt to the job

- make sure specialist advice is available to help:
 - managers with difficult manual handling assessments, and
 - individuals with special health needs
- make sure any accidents or ill health resulting from manual handling activities are appropriately reported
- look at positive ways of rehabilitating any injured employees. This may include:
 - providing support and advice
 - getting specialist advice, if necessary
 - adjusting an employee's work routines, tasks or hours of work while they build up their fitness
 - following the Faculty of Occupational Medicine's guidelines for managing back pain at work
- make sure recruitment information mentions any significant manual handling
- tell the Occupational Health Service about any jobs with significant manual handling tasks, so they can make sure pre-employment screening takes this into account.

MANAGERS' GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

8. This guide will help managers to:
 - understand the requirements of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, MHOR, as amended in 2002
 - identify work activities that include harmful manual handling tasks
 - assess the risks linked to those activities
 - devise preventative measures to reduce the risks, so far as is reasonably practicable
 - draw up and implement local procedures and guidelines
 - monitor and continuously improve precautions for manual handling tasks.
9. The guide does **not** cover the techniques needed for helping people to move. This is a specialised area of manual handling, requiring different planning, training and equipment. If your employees' manual handling activities include helping others to move, you must get advice from CHST.

DEFINITIONS

Manual handling

10. Manual handling is moving or supporting loads by hand or bodily force. It includes:
 - any lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling
 - direct physical effort, such as using the back and arms to carry a box
 - indirect physical effort, such as hauling on a rope while using a hoist
 - deliberately throwing or dropping a load, such as waste items into a skip
 - supporting the weight of soil or sand on a shovel while working.
11. The use of bodily force for tasks other than moving or supporting loads doesn't count as manual handling. These tasks **wouldn't** be classed as manual handling:
 - turning the starting handle of an engine
 - lifting the control lever on a machine
 - pulling on a rope while lashing down items on the back of a van
 - holding a drill or other tool while using it.

Injury

12. Manual handling injuries can affect any part of the body. Different physical properties of a load can cause different types of injury, such as:
 - sprains to backs, shoulders and arms, due to its weight or shape
 - cuts from sharp edges or rough surfaces
 - burns from extreme temperatures

- sprains and strains from trying to deal with a slippery surface or unexpected movement.
13. Injuries caused by toxic or corrosive substances leaking from a load, or contaminating its surface aren't covered by these Regulations. These would be covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, COSHH.

Load

14. A load is a separate moveable object, such as:

- boxes of paper, files or furniture
- a person being helped to move
- animals
- sand or soil on a shovel.

A tool or machine being used for its intended purpose, such as a chainsaw or fire hose, is **not** a load.

HEALTH EFFECTS

15. Manual handling injuries usually affect the musculoskeletal system. This includes the muscles, bones, ligaments, tendons and cartilage. Problems can either be:
- short-term injuries and illness, such as sprains, strains, cuts and bruises, or
 - long-term chronic conditions, such as 'slipped' or prolapsed discs.
16. Back injuries are most common, accounting for 43% of all musculoskeletal injuries. Research has shown that 4 out of 5 employees will suffer back pain severe enough to cause absence from work at some time. Many back problems build up over time, rather than being linked to any one incident.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

17. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require employers to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to their employees' health and safety at work. If these general assessments show that manual handling tasks could cause harm, then the requirements of the MHOR apply. See the flow chart summary on page 19.
18. Employers must:
- **identify** hazardous manual handling tasks
 - **avoid** them, so far as is reasonably practicable
 - **assess** any hazardous manual handling tasks that can't be avoided
 - **reduce** the risk of injury to the lowest level reasonably practicable
 - **provide** adequate training and supervision to allow employees to carry out manual handling tasks safely
 - **provide** information about the type and variety of loads

- **involve** employees and their representatives in the risk assessment process
- **review** assessments regularly and revise them if jobs change
- **monitor** preventative measures to make sure they are effective, and take urgent steps to improve them if they're not.

IDENTIFYING HARMFUL MANUAL HANDLING TASKS

19. The first step towards meeting the requirements of the law and protecting employees is to identify potentially harmful manual handling tasks. Do this by:
- reviewing general risk assessments
 - observing employees while they work. Look out for people puffing, straining or sweating while carrying out manual handling tasks.
 - reviewing work routines and operating procedures. Don't forget to include non-standard, seasonal or emergency tasks
 - asking employees which tasks they have problems with and why
 - reviewing accident and ill health records. Look out for repeated accidents involving loads, such as sprains and strains, fractures and cuts. See if there are any patterns of ill health that could be linked to manual handling, such as recurrent back, neck and shoulder problems.
20. Draw up a list of all the tasks you decide are harmful - group similar tasks and situations together to make things easier. If your research shows that certain tasks are linked to severe or frequent injuries, deal with them first. Remember to work your way down the list in a systematic way, so nothing gets missed.

AVOIDING MANUAL HANDLING

21. The regulations make it clear that employers' **first priority** should **always** be to avoid harmful manual handling tasks wherever possible. This may be done either by stopping the harmful task altogether, or automating or mechanising it.
22. Some loads may not really need moving at all. With a little thought and planning, it may be possible to get rid of some manual handling tasks completely. Examples of this include:
- getting suppliers to deliver products directly to the place they'll be used, rather than to a storage area for onward delivery
 - taking a meal or treatment to a client instead of moving them.
23. Another way of avoiding manual handling is to automate or mechanise the task. This could be done by providing:
- sack trucks
 - powered trolleys or stair-climbers
 - fork-lift trucks
 - powered conveyors
 - automated hoists.

24. However, make sure that any such equipment is suitable for the task and won't introduce other hazards to health. Also, remember that providing equipment will require further management action, including:
- finding somewhere safe, secure and accessible to store it when not in use
 - arranging routine servicing and maintenance
 - setting up systems for reporting breakdowns and getting repairs made
 - devising documented safe operating procedures and supervising employees to make sure they follow them
 - arranging specific training for employees to make sure they can use the equipment safely.

ASSESSING THE RISKS

25. If you decide that it isn't reasonably practicable to avoid a particular manual handling task, then you must carry out a risk assessment. The assessment should identify the foreseeable problems employees are likely to face when carrying out manual handling, and the measures needed to deal with them. These measures should include providing training for employees to allow them to deal safely and effectively with the tasks they do.
26. You should always write down the assessment as proof that you have considered the risks, unless:
- the assessment is so simple that it could easily be repeated and explained, or
 - the task is so short, simple and low risk that it would be unreasonable to spend time recording it.
27. You **must** encourage your employees and their trade union health and safety representatives to be actively involved in the risk assessment process. They have daily experience of the manual handling problems linked to their jobs, and may be able to suggest simple solutions to them. Involving your employees at an early stage has a number of benefits, including:
- making sure all hazards are included in the assessment
 - making sure protective measures are practical and appropriate. Employees are more likely to follow safe working procedures they have helped to develop and that they feel are practical and relevant
 - promoting co-operation on health and safety matters
 - improving working relationships and morale.
28. The regulations and guidance supporting them stress the importance of taking an ergonomic approach to manual handling problems. Ergonomics is sometimes described as 'fitting the job to the person, rather than the person to the job'.
29. An ergonomic approach will cover **all** aspects of a manual handling task, and will look specifically at:
- the load - **what** is moved or handled
 - the task - **how** it is done

- the environment - **where** it is done
 - the individual capability of employees - **who** does the task.
30. To be meaningful, assessments must be based on a practical understanding of each of these factors. This means that managers are best placed to carry out assessments, in consultation with their employees. More details about the issues you need to consider are given below. CHST have also devised a checklist to help you record the assessment. You can get more help and guidance from CHST and the Occupational Health Service.

The load

31. You must think about the load itself and whether any of its physical characteristics could be harmful. Think about whether it is:
- **heavy?** In the past, most guides to manual handling listed tables of 'acceptable' weights. This tends not to happen now because:
 - weight tables can be misleading
 - capability varies greatly between individuals
 - even very light loads may cause injury if they are moved repeatedly or in an awkward way

If you feel that weight guidelines would be useful for your service, ask CHST.
 - **bulky or unwieldy?** Injuries are more likely if a load:
 - measures over 75cms in any dimension
 - doesn't have convenient, safe handholds
 - is an awkward shape
 - needs to be lifted from the ground, but is too big to fit between the handler's knees as they stand up
 - blocks the handler's vision
 - is unwieldy and difficult to control
 - is handled outdoors and could be affected by sudden gusts of wind
 - has an unbalanced centre of gravity. This may be a particular problem with sealed, unmarked boxes
 - **difficult to grasp?** Loads may be difficult to hold because they are large, rounded, smooth, wet or greasy. In all of these cases, injury is more likely because greater grip strength is needed to hold the load securely. This is tiring and may force the handler into awkward postures. There is also more chance that the load will be dropped, causing injury to the handler and damage to the load itself
 - **unstable?** Injuries are more likely if a load isn't rigid, or has contents that could shift unexpectedly

- **sharp, hot or cold?** Injuries are more likely if loads have sharp or rough edges, or if they are too hot or cold to hold without protective gloves. These characteristics may also cause problems with maintaining good grip and posture.

The task

32. Think about how the manual handling task is carried out. Some ways of handling a load are particularly harmful and need to be avoided. Observe the task and check whether:

- **the load is held or moved at a distance from the body?** If a load can't be held close to the body, the risk of injury increases, particularly to the lower back. A person's individual handling capacity falls as their hands move away from their body. As a rough guide, a load held at arm's length will be five times more stressful than the same load held against the body. Handling loads away from the body can also make them less easy to control, and make over-balancing more likely
- **it involves twisting the trunk?** Handling or supporting a load with the body in a twisted position places extra stress on the lower back. Always aim to avoid this type of movement if possible
- **it involves stooping?** Stooping forward means that the weight of the upper body is added to that of the load, which places extra stress on the lower back
- **it involves reaching upwards?** Reaching upwards places extra strain on the arms and back. It also makes the load harder to control and the risk of dropping it greater
- **the handler can achieve a safe posture?** Poor posture reduces the handlers' level of control over the load, and increases the likelihood of it moving unexpectedly or being dropped. Sudden shifting of a load puts extra stress on the body and increases the risk of injury. Make sure clothing or footwear won't cause problems. Clothing should be loose fitting and comfortable. Shoes should be flat, sturdy and with good non-slip soles. Generally, sandals and open-toed shoes aren't suitable
- **it combines harmful factors?** Tasks that involve handling while stooping and twisting, or twisting while reaching upwards are especially hazardous, and must be avoided wherever possible
- **it involves lifting or lowering excessive distances?** The distance through which a load is lifted can increase the risk of injury. Large distances are more demanding, and may mean that the handler needs to change their grip part way. Try to avoid lifts from floor level if possible
- **the load has to be carried for excessive distances?** Carrying a load for long distances increases the risk of injury because muscles tire. As a rough guide, any distance over 10 metres is likely to cause problems

- **it involves excessive pushing or pulling?** Pushing or pulling a load can also cause injury. Slipping accidents are more likely if the floor surface is poor, or footwear is unsuitable. The risk of injury also increases if pushing or pulling is carried out with the hands positioned below knuckle or above shoulder height
- **the load is likely to move suddenly?** Loads may move unexpectedly, such as when a box jammed on a shelf becomes free, or a liquid moves within a container. This sudden movement can place harmful strain on the muscles. Additional injuries are likely if the handler's posture is unstable, such as if they are reaching upwards or are standing on stepladders to reach the load
- **it is repeated often or takes a long time to complete?** The risk of injury increases if loads have to be handled frequently, **regardless** of their weight. Similarly, if a task takes a long time to finish, injury is more likely because muscles become tired
- **there is enough rest and recovery time?** Unless there are enough rest and recovery periods between handling tasks, muscles become tired and injury is more likely. This is particularly true for tasks that include fixed postures, as they reduce blood flow to the muscles and increase the effects of fatigue
- **it includes handling while sitting down?** Handling while seated can cause major problems. This is because the handler can't use their more powerful leg muscles to lift, or use the weight of their body to counterbalance the load. All the strain is placed on their upper body, which is weaker and more vulnerable to injury. If handling while seated can't be avoided, make sure that the handler doesn't have to:
 - lean or reach forward, as this places additional strain on their arms and lower back, or
 - twist and stoop to lift from any level below the work surface, such as the floor
- **it includes team handling?** Handling by two or more people can reduce the risk of injury to a lone handler, but it can introduce other problems. Think about whether:
 - there are enough good handholds for all team members
 - the load is too compact to allow team members to move freely
 - any stairs, slopes or rough ground can be travelled safely
 - team members will block each others' vision
 - employees have been trained to carry out team lifting safely

Remember that two people **can't** safely lift twice as much as one. As a rough guide, the limit for a two-person team is only two-thirds of their combined capabilities. For a three-person team, this reduces to half of their combined capabilities.

The working environment

33. The working environment can have a major effect on whether loads can be moved safely. Look at **where** the handling activity takes place. Check whether:
- **there is enough space?** If handlers can't maintain a good posture, then the risk of injury will increase. Think about:
 - low ceilings forcing handlers to stoop, such as in basements and roof spaces
 - furniture or other obstructions blocking access routes, or forcing handlers to twist or lean
 - low work surfaces forcing handlers to bend and stoop
 - **floors are uneven, slippery or unstable?** Injuries caused by manual handling and by accidental slips and trips are more likely if floor surfaces are poor. Make sure employees' footwear is safe and suitable for both the task and the environmental conditions
 - **the level of floor surfaces vary?** Steps and steep slopes make handling more difficult and increase the risk of injury. Carrying items up or down ladders is especially difficult, because the handler also needs to keep hold of the ladder itself. Try to avoid this whenever possible
 - **the heights of work surfaces vary?** The level of work surfaces and shelves can make handling tasks more difficult. Injuries are more likely if there is a large difference between work surface levels, such as from the floor to a shelf at head height
 - **it is too hot, cold or humid?** Extremes of temperature and humidity, along with poor ventilation, increase the risk of injury. If it's too hot, humid or stuffy, handlers tire more quickly and sweating may reduce their grip on a load. Grip strength and dexterity will also be reduced in very cold conditions. Remember that gloves and other protective clothing can reduce grip, hinder movement and reduce dexterity
 - **lighting is adequate?** Poor lighting can increase the risk of injury. Think about:
 - badly lit areas, such as basements, storerooms and stairways. Slips, trips and falls are more likely in these conditions
 - glare and reflection, such as from windows and metal surfaces. This can cause accidents by temporarily dazzling handlers. It can also increase the risk of injury by forcing them to stand awkwardly to avoid discomfort
 - routes that involve moving between very bright and very dim areas. Accidents can happen while handlers' eyes adjust to the different lighting levels.

Individual capability

34. You must consider whether your employees are physically capable of carrying out manual handling tasks safely. Their ability to do so may be affected by a range of factors, including:
- **age.** The risk of manual handling injury is statistically higher for employees in their teens and for those in their 50's and 60's. Bear in mind that older workers may become fatigued more quickly and take longer to recover from injury. Young workers may be more at risk because their relative inexperience and immaturity may lead them to attempt dangerous tasks
 - **gender.** In general, women's lifting strength is less than men's, although there is great individual variation among both sexes
 - **health.** Certain health problems, such as chronic back, hip and knee conditions, may affect an employee's ability to carry out handling tasks safely. Individuals returning to work after a period of absence may be at increased risk of injury until they build up their fitness. If you have any doubts about whether an employee's health affects their ability to carry out handling tasks safely, **always discuss your concerns with them.** Some employees, such as those with special needs, may need a more in-depth assessment carrying out by a medical specialist. You can get more guidance about this from your health and safety adviser and the Occupational Health Service. Remember legally, you must make reasonable adjustments to the workplace and working arrangements, so that any disabled employees aren't disadvantaged. For manual handling tasks, this might include adjusting the weight or size of loads, lowering work surfaces, or reducing the frequency of a task to suit the capability of the individual employee
 - **pregnancy.** Women who are pregnant or have recently given birth are more susceptible to manual handling injuries. This is because hormonal changes during pregnancy affect ligaments and joints. Physical changes, such as increasing body size in the last three months of pregnancy, also make handling tasks more difficult and risky. See the Manager's Guide to Health and Safety for new and expectant mothers for more details.
35. This part of the assessment is essential for identifying any employees who are at increased risk of injury. You must take urgent action to protect these employees from harm. Research has shown that it is usually the task itself that causes injury, rather than an employee's capability. Always look for ways to improve the task, as this will benefit all employees. Remember that the risk of injury is **unacceptable** if most reasonably fit employees can't safely carry out a particular handling activity.

Training

36. When assessing an individual's ability to carry out manual handling, you must also think about whether they've had the training and information they need to work safely. This may include:

- general manual handling awareness training
- practical workshops on good handling technique
- specific information about unusual or difficult loads
- training in the safe use of any handling equipment
- information about safe working procedures
- e-learning courses.

37. The form of training and information you choose will vary with the type of tasks and work situation. Formal training courses will be appropriate in some cases, informal on-the-job training and written instructions for others. If you are unsure about the best type of training for your work situation, ask CHST. You can also check out CHST's corporate training courses. These include:

- a taught manual handling assessment course, and
- a manual handling - the basics e-learning course.

You can find out more details on the CHST training pages on the intranet.

38. Make sure you keep training records for all health and safety courses your employees attend. Many successful compensation claims and prosecutions have been based on an employer's inability to prove that health and safety training had been provided.

39. You should always aim to make sure employees have had the necessary training **before** they have to carry out handling tasks. This is especially important for the more hazardous tasks you identify. Make sure new employees are given copies of the risk assessments relevant to their jobs during their induction. Explain the hazards highlighted by the assessment and the protective measures introduced to protect them.

REDUCING THE RISK OF INJURY

40. The next step in the risk assessment process is to look at ways of reducing the risk of injury to the **lowest level reasonably practicable**. In practical terms, this means introducing measures until the cost of any further precautions outweighs the benefits they would give. Cost in this context means not only money, but also time and effort. Here are some examples...

- Relocating a second-floor canteen or reprographics office to a ground-floor room, close to a main entrance. This allows bulk deliveries of paper, food or canned drinks to be made by suppliers directly to the point of use, instead of expecting employees to move them around the building.
- Replacing bulky metal boxes with lightweight cool bags or insulated carriers for transporting meals between kitchens and service users.

- Getting contractors to move furniture and equipment during major office reorganisations. This will usually be cheaper than paying for:
 - the specialist training to allow employees to move the items safely
 - mechanised equipment, such as powered stair-climbers
 - a compensation claim should an employee have an accident while attempting to move items.

Remember that the amount of money you spend on precautions should reflect the level of risk, **not** cost centre budgets.

41. As before, you should take an ergonomic approach to the problem. Think about the task, load, environment and personal capabilities of your employees. Go back to the hazards you've already identified and decide how you can prevent them causing harm. Some ideas are given below. It is particularly important that you involve your workforce and their representatives in this. Make sure that any solutions you devise together are practical and effective. Do this by:

- observing the activity after the changes are implemented
- talking to your employees
- continuing to monitor reports of accidents and ill health.

If your adjustments don't work, then you must think again and try other solutions.

The load

42. Is it possible to change the load itself in any way? Can you make it:
- **lighter?** Break the load down into separate component parts or order lower package weights
 - **smaller or easier to manage?** Make the load less bulky so that it can be grasped more easily or specify smaller packages
 - **easier to grasp?** Do loads have suitable handles or grips? If not, can you specify containers and packaging that do? Alternatively, can you put the load into a container with handles or a sling to move it?
 - **more stable?** Try to make sure loads can't shift unexpectedly while being handled
 - **less damaging to hold?** Use insulated containers for very hot or cold items. Make sure the load hasn't got sharp corners or rough surfaces. If this can't be avoided, provide handling aids or personal protective equipment, PPE. Make sure loads are clean and free from dust, oil or other contaminants.

The task

43. Look again at how the task is done. Can you:
- **improve the task layout?** Make sure the layout of the workplace and the sequence of events doesn't hinder handling tasks. Check that storage shelves and work surfaces are at a suitable height. Waist or elbow height

is best for storing items. Above and below this level should only be used for very light items, or those that aren't handled often

- **make it easier for handlers to work safely?** Try to remove any harmful elements of the task. Can you adjust it to:
 - avoid bending, twisting and stooping wherever possible? Think about rearranging the work area, providing handling aids or making sure work surfaces are at the correct height
 - make it possible for the load to be held close against the handler's body? This has a number of benefits, such as lowering the level of stress in the lower back, making the load easier to control and using the handler's body weight to counterbalance the load
 - promote good handling posture? Get rid of any obstacles that prevent handlers getting close to the load or its destination. Look out for things that have to be reached into or over during the task, such as stored items blocking shelves and overly deep boxes or bins
 - replace lifting with pushing or pulling? See if it's possible to slide or roll the load. If this is possible, make sure that floor surfaces are safe, and the employee can position their hands between waist and shoulder height while pushing

- **improve the work routine?** Think about:
 - reducing the need for fixed postures, such as when holding or supporting a load for a long time
 - limiting how often loads have to be handled, especially those that are heavy or awkward
 - making sure there is rest and recovery time between tasks. If possible, allow employees to choose when they need a break, rather than setting standard ones
 - building job rotation into the task. Make sure that the alternative duties use different sets of muscles or this won't help. Try mixing heavy work with lighter tasks, such as writing reports, carrying out inspections, or filling in timesheets

- **make seated handling tasks safer?** Make sure employees don't have to lift loads from the floor. Check that chairs are suitable. Castors aren't advisable because they may cause a chair to move unexpectedly. Swivel-action seats are helpful because they'll help the handler face the load without having to twist

- **make team handling safer?** Make sure:
 - there's enough space for the team to manoeuvre
 - there are enough safe handholds
 - one person plans and directs the task
 - handling aids, such as slings and stretchers, are used for loads that are small or difficult to grasp
 - team members are similar in build and strength, if possible
 - the strongest member of the team takes the heaviest side of an unbalanced load

- **improve PPE and work clothing?** These should be well-fitting and mustn't restrict movement. Make sure that:
 - loads won't catch on pockets and fasteners
 - gloves are close-fitting and supple
 - footwear provides enough support, protection and grip.

The working environment

44. Look at where the handling is done. Can you:

- **remove any obstructions to free movement?** Plan your route. Make sure gangways are clear and there is enough space for handlers to manoeuvre. Improving general housekeeping arrangements will often help
- **improve flooring?** Floor surfaces should be in good repair, level, and non-slip. Make sure there is a prompt and effective system for cleaning up spillages that could cause slips
- **avoid steps and steep ramps?** Where possible, handling activities should take place on the same level. If this isn't possible, try to make sure slopes are gentle and steps well maintained
- **improve lighting?** Make sure there is enough well directed light for handlers to see clearly and judge distances accurately
- **improve the thermal environment or ventilation?** Injuries are less likely in a comfortable working environment. If you can't improve temperature and ventilation, think about relocating the work.

Individual capability

45. Think about your employees. Can you:

- do more to protect those with health problems or women who are pregnant or have recently given birth?
- give them better information about safe manual handling? Make sure any information you give is clear and easy to understand. Check that employees have read and understood it
- provide training? Remember that although training will help prevent injuries, it mustn't be your only precaution. Well-designed safe systems of work should always be your first priority. Any training you organise should cover:
 - how to recognise harmful manual handling
 - the health risks of poor manual handling, signs and symptoms to watch out for and how to report them
 - what to do if they have concerns about a task, how to get help and advice
 - how to use equipment safely, including mechanical lifting aids and PPE
 - good handling techniques

- the agreed safe working arrangements for their job.

SAFE WORKING PROCEDURES

46. Use the risk assessments to draw up safe working procedures for the manual handling tasks you are responsible for. Don't forget to involve your employees and their representatives. You must review your assessments regularly to make sure they are still valid. As a general guide, this means at least every 12 months. You should review them more frequently for higher risk activities. Review assessments **immediately** if there are any significant changes, such as new work locations, personnel with health problems or special needs, or different work equipment.

ACCIDENTS AND ILL HEALTH

47. If any of your employees are injured while carrying out manual handling tasks, you must follow the Council's accident reporting procedure. **You** are responsible for completing a F2508 form, which is the Council's report of an injury or dangerous occurrence. If the injury is a serious one, such as a fracture, or if the employee can't carry out their normal duties for more than seven days, a report will have to be sent to the Health and Safety Executive. They have the right to investigate any work-related accidents and ill health. Bear in mind that certain ill health conditions may also need reporting if they are linked to work. More details are given in the Accidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Policy and Guidance.
48. If an accident results in sickness absence, you must follow the Council's attendance procedures. You can get copies of this procedure and more advice from Human Resources.

Rehabilitation of injured employees

49. It is important to try to encourage injured employees back into work as soon as they are sufficiently recovered. Research has shown that this benefits both them and the organisation they work for. The longer someone is off work, the harder it can be for them to return. Only 5% of people who are absent for more than a year ever return to work.
50. Make sure you keep in touch with any injured employees. Let them know what help they can get from the Council. Find out whether any adaptations to their job or special support would help them return. This could include temporarily limiting or changing the range of tasks they do, providing extra help from colleagues or adjusting their working hours while they build up their fitness. Their GP or other medical advisers may be able to make suggestions that would help you with this. See the fitness for work risk assessment and guidelines for more information. Don't forget that you can also get advice from the Occupational Health Service. Make sure you get permission from the injured employee before you seek any specific advice.

51. Poor manual handling is often related to chronic back pain. The Faculty of Occupational Medicine has set out guidelines to help people with back pain and their employers. You can find a summary of their advice on the Council's intranet and website.

Job specifications and pre-employment screening

52. If you are recruiting to a job that includes a significant amount of manual handling or particular strength, make sure the job specification and recruitment information mention this. Including this type of information will allow interested individuals to make a properly informed decision about their suitability for the job. It will also help the Council show that they provided appropriate information to candidates, should problems arise after recruitment.

EMPLOYEES' DUTIES

53. Employees also have duties under MHOR and supporting health and safety law. These include:
- following the safe systems of work designed to protect them
 - making proper use of any equipment provided for their health and safety
 - co-operating with the Council on health and safety matters
 - informing their manager about any hazardous manual handling they identify
 - telling their manager about any health conditions they have that could affect their ability to carry out manual handling tasks safely
 - making sure nothing they do at work puts others at risk.
54. A guidance note for employees summarising the requirements of MHOR and giving tips on safe manual handling is available on the Council's intranet and website.

MANUAL HANDLING FLOW CHART

