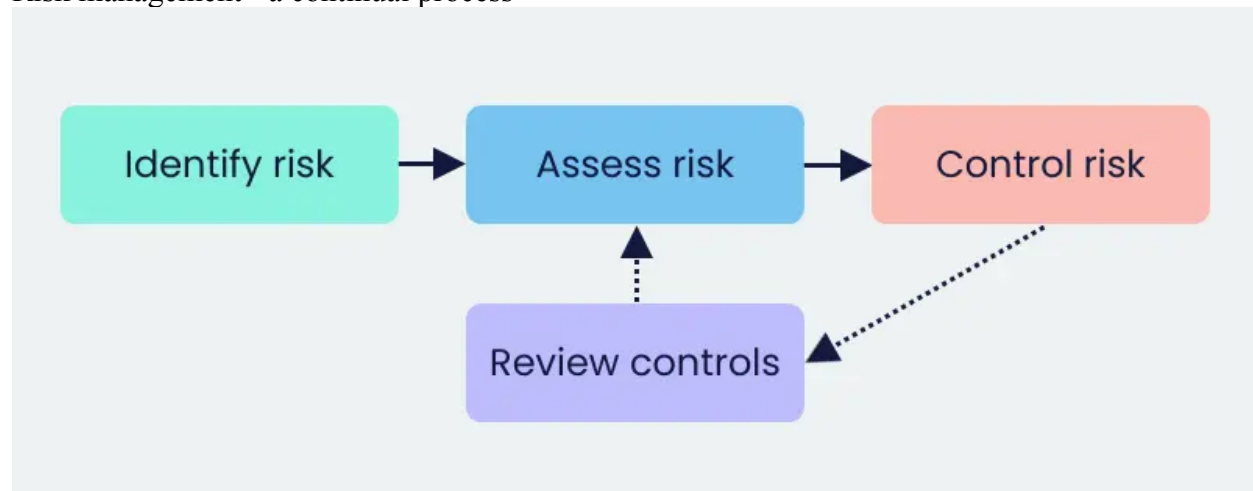


Risk management - a continual process



Assessing and managing risks

Assessing and managing risks

Manual handling should be avoided where possible. This can be achieved by:
redesigning the task to avoid moving the load.
automating or mechanising the process.

When manual handling tasks cannot be avoided, risk assessments must be completed to assess and reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable. The assessment should consider the task, the load, the working environment and individual capability. It is important to choose the right level of assessment for each manual handling task, and the simple filters help to identify low-risk tasks from tasks that need more detailed risk assessment.

Managers should also ensure individual risk assessments are undertaken for staff which take into consideration any factors that may increase their risk of injury from manual handling and any existing musculoskeletal disorders to prevent them from worsening.

Managers who complete risk assessments must be suitably and sufficiently trained and competent to do so. They may need to seek further advice and assistance from a health and safety advisor, back care or manual handling advisor when carrying out a risk assessment. Risk assessments should take into consideration vulnerable workers. Managers should ensure that employees and safety reps are consulted as part of the development of risk assessments.

HSE guidance on the manual handling regulations provides more detailed information on the specific assessment that may be required, including:

Simple filters to distinguish low-risk tasks from tasks which require more detail.

The manual handling assessment charts (MAC tool) or risk assessment of pushing and pulling (RAPP tool). The MAC and RAPP tools are designed to help users understand, interpret and categorise the level of risk using numerical and colour-coded scoring, similar to a traffic light system, to highlight high-risk manual handling tasks.

A full risk assessment template.

In addition, where tasks/activities may be repetitive, the 'Assessment of Repetitive Tasks (ART) tool' can help assess tasks involving the upper limbs.

Staff input is valuable in solving any new or job-specific issues. and having a safety representative actively involved throughout the risk assessment process can better ensure effective and safe practices are adopted and supported by staff.

A great example of innovation by a member of staff is the invention of a trolley to assist with their work activities. The trolley was designed and manufactured and now features as a measure to reduce the risk to staff when carrying out their work.

Communicating risk controls

Communicating risk controls

When a risk assessment is complete, one of the most important aspects of implementing it is to communicate the control measures to all staff and other relevant people affected. This may be done by developing a safe operating procedure system of work which is specific to the task being undertaken and using that as the basis for training staff and communicating controls.

Consideration should also be given to employees who operate visual display equipment e.g. sonographers, dentists and others involved in medical/clinical imaging work who are likely to meet the definition of 'users' or 'operators' within the provisions of the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002)/The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992. Specific risk assessments are required to consider the ergonomic set-up of such equipment and the user.

Reviewing controls

Reviewing controls

It is important to review the controls put in place to ensure they are working. This may be completed at a set frequency. A risk assessment and related procedures should also be reviewed if:

they may no longer be effective

there are workplace changes that could lead to new risks such as changes to staff; a process; or the substances or equipment used

a member of staff reports any concern, accident or near miss.

Any changes should be incorporated into the updated risk assessment and procedures, and communicated to staff.

A full and comprehensive guide to risk assessment can be found on the Health and Safety Executive's website.

Monitoring health and safety measures

Monitoring health and safety measures

It is important to check that measures put in place to manage risks are effective. This can be achieved by implementing monitoring. Monitoring may be proactive which includes routine inspections of premises, plant and equipment and staff, and body mapping with staff. Reactive monitoring includes investigating accidents and incidents and monitoring cases of ill health and sickness absence. The results of monitoring should be reflected by updating risk assessments, management arrangements and procedures, and communicating information to staff.

Training staff

Training staff

All staff are required to complete the mandatory manual handling training provided by their employer which is relevant for their role as soon as they start work. There are some examples of good practice schemes which support employers to improve standards and consistency. These include:

The All Wales NHS Manual Handling Passport Scheme - the purpose of the scheme is to promote health and safety in the workplace with regard to manual handling practice, by ensuring a consistent approach and the promotion of safer handling practice within NHS organisations in Wales. This will:

Enable organisations to meet the legislative requirements under the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002)/The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended 2003 & 2006)/ The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000.
Support a seamless approach allowing staff to transfer their skills across NHS Wales.
The Scottish Manual Handling Passport Scheme (SMHPS) - an initiative designed to improve the standard and consistency of manual handling training/education and the systems (process/procedures) that underpin it within Health Boards and Local Authorities (LA) in Scotland.