

Risk Assessment Standard

How to Guidance



Is a Risk Assessment a Legal Requirement?

Yes, it is a legal requirement for every employer to assess risks associated with health and safety, arising out of their work and the activities they expect their employees to carry out. The assessment should identify what needs to be done to control the risk to health and safety of the employees and those who could be impacted by their activities i.e., members of the public, contractors, new and expectant mothers, and customers.

INTRODUCTION

The Warwickshire County Council (WCC) risk assessment process follows the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) general basic five steps principle. Your risk assessment must consider.

- a) all foreseeable hazards and risks
- b) actual practice (what is currently happening, and not just what should be happening as recorded in procedures and manuals)
- c) routine and non-routine activities (e.g., event or school trip)
- d) emergency procedures
- e) unusual/adverse conditions, e.g., inclement weather.

Please note that stress and mental health assessments follow the same principle of identification of risk but are to be completed on an Individual/Team Wellness Plan.

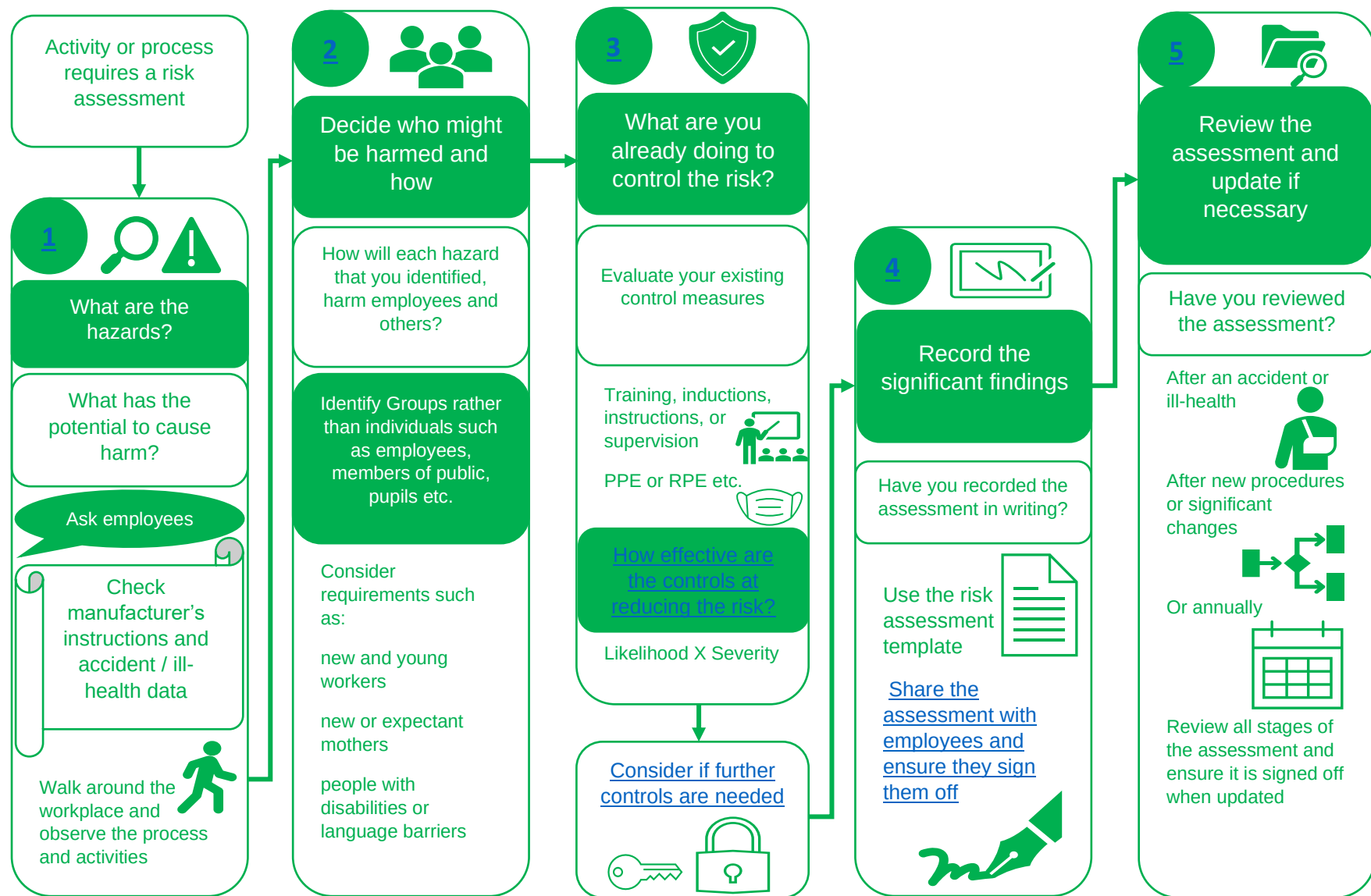
A step-by-step risk assessment guide for each stage is given below. Please note, the headings correspond with the headings on the risk assessment form itself.



I don't know where to start - what should I do?

You are not alone when it comes to risk assessments, you can always speak to your line management for support as well as contacting the H&S service. Please also check out the mandatory Risk Assessment training, as this will cover all aspects around WCC's risk assessment process. Templates and advice are also available on the H&S Sharepoint page.

Please click on the relevant section to find out more information!



STEPS TO RISK ASSESSMENT

What should the risk assessment cover?

Detail the work activity/process/ operation for which the risk assessment applies. Only record for those activities where a significant risk(s) has been identified as a potential consequence of undertaking that work. Insert all other relevant information onto the form, i.e., what activity the assessment relates to, the date you are undertaking the assessment, the planned review date (a minimum of annually), and your own reference number.

What are the hazards?

First you need to work out how people could be harmed. Here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

- Walk around your workplace and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Carefully observe the person or task being assessed. When doing this, don't forget to consider, preparation, normal operation; breakdown conditions; maintenance; cleaning; and emergency situations as appropriate.
- Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious to you.
- Check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.
- Have a look back at your accident and ill-health reports/records – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards. · Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (e.g., high levels of noise, hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVs) or exposure to harmful substances).

Who might be harmed? How might they be harmed?

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people (e.g., 'employees working in the storeroom' or 'pupils'). In each case, identify how they might be harmed, i.e., what type of injury or ill health might occur from that work activity. For example, 'employees may suffer a musculoskeletal injury from repeated lifting of boxes. Consider the following:

- some workers have particular requirements, e.g., new and young workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities, or where there are language barriers, as they may be at particular risk.
- Cleaners, visitors, contractors, agency staff, work experience, maintenance workers, volunteers, etc., who may not be in the workplace all the time.



When do I need to prepare a Risk Assessment?

A Risk Assessment should be carried out before you undertake any activity which presents a risk of injury or ill health.

- Members of the public, or others who could be hurt by your activities.
- If you share your workplace, you will need to think about how your work affects others present, as well as how their work affects your employees.

Remember, your risk assessment should only include what you could reasonably be expected to know – you are not expected to anticipate unforeseeable risks. Consider all elements of the process/operation/activity, the people at risk, the environment, equipment, and emergency.

What are you already doing to control the risks?

Firstly, look at what you're already doing to control the risk and what measures you have in place and how the work is organised. The existing control measures must be accurate and in place at the time the risk assessment is produced to reflect actual practice. For example, control measures can include the provision of equipment (e.g., to prevent manual handling), the provision of information, instruction and training, lone working procedure in place, etc.

Considering the controls you are already doing, what is the current level of risk?

Once all existing control measures have been identified the risk level should then be evaluated using the risk matrix below. This is to identify whether your current control measures are suitable and sufficient in reducing the risk to the lowest possible level. You will therefore need to decide how 'likely' it is that the harm will occur with the controls in place; and what the 'likely severity' will be. To calculate the risk, you multiply severity x likelihood. Using the matrix, this will provide you with an outcome of either, 'low', 'medium' or 'high'. In most circumstances, when control measures are introduced the 'likelihood' score will reduce, however the 'severity' will remain the same.

		LIKELIHOOD				
		VERY UNLIKELY (freak event – no known history)	UNLIKELY (foreseeable under unusual circumstances)	LIKELY (having a greater-than- even chance of occurring)	HIGH LIKELY (to occur-foreseeable)	ALMOST CERTAIN (of occurring)
SEVERITY	NEGLECTIBLE (no real visible injury / illness)	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
	MINOR (no long-term effects, first-aid injury)	LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
	SERIOUS (heavy bruising, deep flesh wound, three day lost time accident)	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
	SEVERE (lost time accidents and major injuries)	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
	VERY SEVERE (long-term injury/illness/ fatality)	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH

FAQ

What evidence is there, that writing a Risk Assessment reduces incidents and accidents?

Planning activities, we undertake in work is extremely important to ensure safety. Part of the planning stage is to fully risk assess the activity and part of that process is to document and communicate your risk assessment and controls to all those carrying out your activities. This ensures they understand the controls in place and the reason behind them to reduce the risk. If everyone is on the same page with understanding and controlling the risk, this then should in turn reduce accidents and incidents that may occur because of the activity.

Do you need to do anything else to reduce the risk?

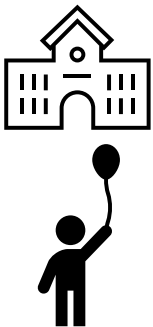
Based on your calculated risk level using the matrix refer to the table below:

Low	It is unlikely that harm will be caused, and/or the outcome would result in very minor injury/damage. No further controls are needed. However, consideration may be given to a more cost-effective solution that (does not raise the risk or introduce other hazards) or improvement that does not necessarily mean more cost. Monitoring is needed to make sure that the current controls are maintained and effective. Even if a 'low' residual risk rating is achieved, consideration should be given to further reduce risk to meet the legal requirement.
Medium	There is a possibility harm may occur. The level of harm will depend on your evaluation. You must consider if the existing control measures are sufficient or if further action could be taken to further reduce the risk level. The consideration of whether measures need to be implemented are 'as far as is reasonably practicable' (The risk level may remain at 'medium' where the risk is inherent to the activity/process/operation).
High	Certain or near certain that harm will result in serious injury/damage. The planned activity/process/operation should not continue. The risk assessment should be undertaken again to identify what further action will be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable lower level. If the residual risk remains high after all control measures have been implemented, then the planned work (activity, process, or operation) must not be started or continued. All work where the risk of injury/damage remains high must be authorised by a competent senior manager before proceeding. The authorisation of work that is high risk must only be granted under exceptional circumstances.

What possible activities/processes require a Risk Assessment?



Examples of some common **WCC Corporate** and **School** activities:



Driving, personal safety, homeworking, DSE, stress, mental health, extreme weather, play equipment, excavations, animal related, manual handling, security, lone working, working on/near water, legionella, verbal/physical abuse, electrical, slips/trips and falls, environmental, confined spaces, infection, machinery/equipment, COSHH, anti-social behaviour, expectant mothers, young workers, management of contractors, working at height, asbestos, fire, hot works, construction, hand arm vibration.

**Please note that this list above is not exhaustive.*

Examples of some common **School** specific activities:



Areas including above but also considering, Off-site educational visits, after school clubs, violence involving pupils, school events, caretaker activities, food preparation, playground and classroom activities, swimming pools.

**Please note that this list above is not exhaustive.*

Don't forget!



It should be noted the above activities could be identified as low risk activity or a high-risk activity depending on the scenario and frequency in which they are undertaken.

For example, manual handling of a 1kg box from one side of the office to another would be considered low risk, however the moving and handling of persons in a social care environment may be considered high risk.

Commuting to and from work may be considered low risk, driving between multiple sites daily may be considered high risk.



As I have written the Risk Assessment am I then liable if something goes wrong?

Managers have always been required to undertake risk assessments within WCC for the activities they control, the documenting of Risk Assessments does not change the liabilities involved, but as always if WCC employees are following the policies and guidance you will receive support should something not go according to plan.



Where should I store my Risk Assessments?

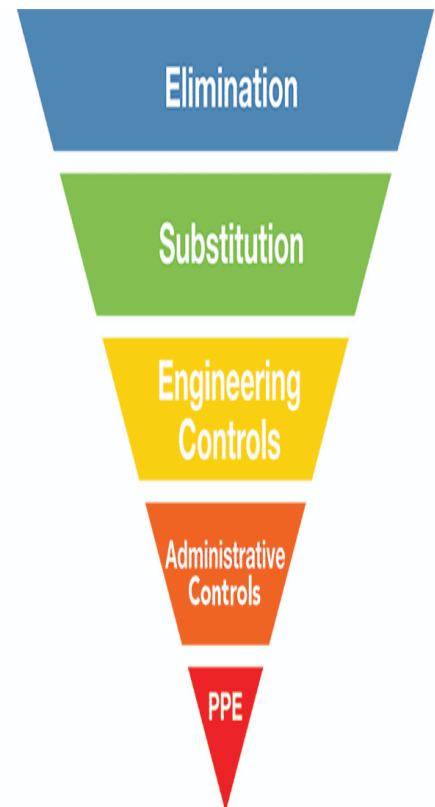
This needs to be agreed with your management team, but they need to be somewhere accessible to the whole team and or service and be able to be easily shared when required. They therefore could either be an electronic copy in a shared folder or a hard version stored at your services locations.

Action to be taken

If you therefore deem further controls necessary, then the 'Further Action' column must be completed. When considering controls apply the hierarchy of controls to eliminate the risk (where possible) or reduce to the lowest possible level:

Hierarchy of Control

- **Eliminate** – can the hazard be removed completely?
- **Reduce/Substitute** - try a less risky option, for example, substituting it for something less hazardous, reducing the number of personnel who come into contact with the substance, reducing exposure time.
- **Engineering Controls/Isolate/Enclose** - prevent access to the hazard (e.g., separate persons from the hazard by guarding or using barriers to separate people and traffic etc)
- **Administrative Controls** – through the provision of information, instruction, training, supervision, safe systems of work etc
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** - is the last consideration for control as it does not contribute to a safer environment and only protects the individual. All other options should be considered and provided where possible. PPE may then be used to protect personnel from the residual risk or used as a back-up or additional control measure (PPE includes eye protection, safety footwear, hard hat etc.)
- **Welfare facilities** – e.g., first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination.



FAQ

What does reasonably practicable mean?

This means balancing the level of risk against the cost (measures) required to control the real risk. This means looking at money, time, and effort it takes to instigate those measures. You do not need to act if it is grossly disproportionate to the level of risk posed.

Involve staff, so that you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards.

Please note, in this section you must only record those controls that you do not currently have in place. Detail what action needs to be taken (which may be a short-term action until your long-term action can be achieved), who is going to implement it. Once the action has been taken/implemented, state by whom and when it was completed, this demonstrates

that the control is now an existing control. When you come to review your assessment formally (i.e., on its annual review cycle), you can add it to the existing control measure section. Remember, prioritise, and tackle the most important things first.

Details and signatures

All completed risk assessments must be signed by the competent risk assessor and the manager responsible for the activity/ process/operation. This will demonstrate that the manager is in agreement with the significant risks that have been identified and the control measures that are in place to eliminate/reduce those risks. Also, as good practice, each assessment should be signed by the persons involved in the activity, where practical a signature sheet has been provided with the risk assessment template).



When should I review my Risk Assessments?

Risk assessments should be reviewed annually or sooner if required. A Risk Assessment will require a review if there has been an accident or a significant change, or employees reporting a problem. A significant change could include a change of location, legislation, equipment, industry best practice or employees undertaking the activity.

change (e.g., changing a petrol strimmer to a battery-operated strimmer or a change in process such as introducing a telescopic pole for a window cleaner rather than working at height.) or an accident, then don't wait - check your risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it.

Only use the review log provided to confirm that there have been no changes to the current risk assessment. This log needs to be dated and signed by the assessor and manager each year.

Monitor and Review

Monitor – on an ongoing basis monitor your work activities to ensure that the control measures you've implemented are working as planned. Review - Few work activities stay the same. Changes may bring in new equipment, substances, processes, and procedures that could lead to new hazards. It makes sense, therefore, to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis.

You should review if:

During the year, if there is a significant



How do we handle last minute activities?

Dynamic Risk Assessments are still a key part of managing risk within WCC, adapting from your plans to anything that occurs. Activities should still be planned in advance but if circumstances require you to change what you are doing this can be dynamically risk assessed. This may require you to amend your risk assessments in the future to ensure all foreseeable circumstances are covered to aid in future planning.

For information, there are different types of risk assessment

Generic Risk Assessment

Generic activities are those which although they are carried out at different times and locations, the hazards and risks are largely the same and do not change.

Control measures maybe different and must control the hazards present in your work activities, locations and staff.

The assessor must satisfy themselves that the assessment is appropriate that it details the actual work environment and circumstances and that it has been adapted to consider the persons involved.

Specific Risk Assessment

Specific RA are required for activities where the hazards and risks are only applicable to that activity or process.

There are also occasions where there is a requirement in legislation to undertake a specific assessment where it is identified that there are hazards and risks specific to an individual person. For example, a new and expectant mother, person with a disability, or a young person.

Other areas that require specific RA include Stress Individual wellness plans, using hazardous substances (COSHH), Manual handling operations and DSE use. These should still be included in your main RA.

Dynamic Risk Assessment

Sometimes activities are undertaken where situations occur where there may be a change that could not be foreseen, for example an unpredictable situation, emergency situation, sudden change in environment, weather conditions, responding to a breakdown etc. An ongoing or dynamic risk assessment is a continuous process of identifying the hazards during that activity, assessing/evaluating the risk and taking immediate action to eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level, as far as is reasonably practicable. Dynamic risk assessments cannot be written prior to an event as the ability to adapt to a situation quickly and calmly to reduce the likelihood of injury, damage or ill health is critical.



What about Training?

Risk assessment training is identified by WCC as mandatory for those undertaking risk assessments.

A level of understanding of the risk assessment process is required. Those persons involved in undertaking risk assessments must complete the WCC health and safety risk assessment training course, this can be completed via the elearning training module on Learning Hub, or for schools, via the elearning or face-to-face workshop course. It is required to undertake risk assessment training every three years.

They must also have sufficient knowledge, experience and understanding of the work activities/ processes/ operations that they are assessing.

The Workforce Health & Safety Team deliver the Risk Assessment Workshop training to WCC employees where necessary.

Courses and schedules can be found via the Intranet's health and safety training page and can be booked through Learning Hub by entering the specific codes i.e., HSW RA003, for Risk Assessment Workshop, HSW RA004 for Risk Assessment elearning.

Schools should complete the automated booking form found on the <https://schools.warwickshire.gov.uk/> website, under Managing schools – Health and Safety – Health and Safety documents for schools, then under the training heading, in the WCC Corporate Health and Safety training courses for schools' document. This document gives provisional dates for courses and the external learner – booking request form can be found linked on pages 2 and 3.



What training do I need to prepare a Risk Assessment?

In WCC we expect every employee who has delegated responsibility for managing risk assessments to have undertaken our Risk Assessment Workshop or elearning. Training is also to be refreshed every three years to ensure competency remains high and any legal changes are covered. Please read the training section for more information about the course and how to book on to them.



Risk Assessment Form

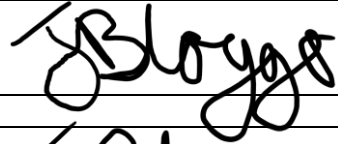
		LIKELIHOOD				
		VERY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	LIKELY	HIGHLY LIKELY	ALMOST CERTAIN
SEVERITY	NEGLIGIBLE	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
	MINOR	LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
	SERIOUS	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
	SEVERE	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
	VERY SEVERE	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH

Risk Assessment for (Activity/Process/Operation)	Working from Home
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Service	Example service	Team / Section	Example team		
Assessment Completion Date	01/04/20	Next Assessment Review Date	01/04/21	Reference Number	A01

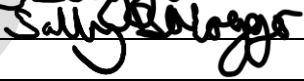
What are the hazards? <i>(i.e. what can cause harm, e.g. slips, trips, falls, manual handling, lone working)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(e.g. employees, pupils, members of the public, etc. and the significant risk(s) e.g. fracture, muscle strain, fatality)?</i>	What are you already doing to control the risks? <i>(e.g. what controls do you have in place? e.g. physical barriers, training, documentation, PPE)</i>	Considering those controls you are already doing, what is the current risk level? <i>(i.e. high, medium or low – use the matrix above)</i>	What further action can be taken to control the risk? <i>(i.e. only record action/additional controls measures you are going to implement, e.g. introduce a lone working buddy system, provide additional training)</i>	Who needs to carry out the action and when is the action needed by?	Action completed (Date)
Stress and mental health	Employees. There may be additional risk with workers working on their own. A lack of regular contact can make employees feel	Ensure there are options for booking in time in the office. Keep regular work related and non-work-related contact between staff via telephone or online. Have regular scheduled online and face to face team meetings.	Medium	Individual wellness plans to be created with team members and updated annually. Team wellness plan created with the team and updated annually. Staff to be made aware of EAP and how to access it.	Jo Bloggs Jo Bloggs Jo Bloggs	Jo Bloggs 12/06/20 Jo Bloggs 12/06/20 Jo Bloggs 12/06/20

	isolated or disconnected. Employees working from home could feel additional stress from their living situations and/or homelife.	Team lead to have regular individual 1 2 1 meetings with team members.				
Slips, trips, and falls	Employees Possible slips on spilt liquids or other substances. Slips caused by poor weather conditions. Trips over loose cables.	Ensure floors are checked regularly and spills are cleaned ASAP. Staff to check flooring areas are suitable. Have desks and equipment arranged to avoid trailing wires. Secure to the floor if unavoidable and temporary.	Medium	Team Lead to ensure employees have time to have and make lunch during working day. Staff at home to ensure working space is kept clean and tidy.	Jo Bloggs Jo Bloggs	Jo Bloggs 06/05/20 Jo Bloggs 06/05/20

Name of Assessor	Joanne Bloggs	Signature	
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Name of Manager responsible for activity / process	Joanne Bloggs	Signature	
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This form can be used to record and demonstrate that the above risk assessment(s) has been provided to relevant employees (as below) to inform them of the risk assessment findings (i.e., the hazards, risks, and control measures associated with their work).

Risk Assessment(s) for (Activity/Process/Operation)	Working from Home	
Name of Person involved in the Activity/Process/Operation	Signature	Date
Joanne Bloggs		02/04/20
Sally Bloggs		02/04/20