PROCEDURE FOR UNDERTAKING HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENTS.

1. Introduction

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to carry out risk assessments of their work activities to identify significant hazards that could harm either their employees or others affected by the activity, in order to decide what needs to be done to eliminate, reduce or manage the risk. Other health and safety legislation also require risk assessments to be undertaken.

The School delegates the task of undertaking risk assessments and implementing control measures to local managers or other relevant persons who manage or organise activities. Departments and Divisions must identify in their Local Policy Statement which staff have been tasked with undertaking risk assessments. This procedure is intended to assist any member of staff charged with the task of undertaking risk assessments. Further help and assistance is available from the Health and Safety Team.

The Estates Division is responsible for making arrangements for premises-related risk assessments to be undertaken on a School-wide basis, covering such risks as fire, legionella and asbestos.

2. Guidance on completing risk assessments

The Risk Assessment Review group concluded that it would be not be helpful for the School to prescribe a single format for recording all risk assessments, because of the diverse range of activities undertaken in the School. While departments are free to use any appropriate format to record their risk assessments, this section of the procedure sets out the key elements that must be addressed in any risk assessment regardless of how the assessment is recorded.

Trade unions safety representatives (where appointed) and employees undertaking the activities should be consulted as part of the process of undertaking the risk assessment.

Key elements that must be included in all risk assessment include:

2.1. What activities the risk assessment covers?

A brief description should be provided so it is clear what activities or events are covered by the risk assessment e.g. replacing light fittings, holding a widening participation event etc. Risk assessments for events should identify the date, time and location for the event.

2.2. Identify any hazards arising from the activity.

This means identifying those aspects of an activity that have the potential to cause harm to staff, students, visitors, contractors or anyone else who could be affected by the activity. Consideration must be given to ensuring all significant hazards are identified. A hazard checklist is provided in Appendix 1 to assist those undertaken risk assessment to identify potential hazards.

2.3. Assessing the risk of someone being harmed.

The risk assessment must assess the risk – the risk is the likelihood of the harm occurring, and the severity of the injury likely to be sustained.

Risks can arise from:

* The physical location where the activities are taking place e.g. using a ladder on a busy staircase is likely to increase the risk;
* The equipment being used e.g. poorly maintained equipment or equipment not fit for the purpose for which it is used is likely to increase the risk;
* The method of work used, e.g. maintenance work in occupied areas;
* Competence of those undertaking the activity, e.g. what training and instruction those undertaking have received;
* Knowledge of those affected by the activity, e.g. visitors attending a public lecture and who are unfamiliar with the layout of the building may have more difficulty evacuating in the event of a fire than those familiar with it.

2.4. Measures to control the risks

The risk assessment must identify what measures are already in place or need to be taken to prevent, reduce or manage the risks. The risk assessment must identify who is responsible for taking action to implement measures identified as being necessary to control the risks, with timescales for implementation where appropriate.

The Management of Health and Safety Regulations require employers to follow “the Principles of Prevention” when determining what control measures are required. In practice this means:

* avoiding the risk wherever possible - consider if it is really necessary to undertaken the task or activity
* combating the risks at source – e.g. repair a defective floor rather than post a warning notice
* adapting work to the individual
* substituting hazardous substances or processes with less hazardous substances or processes e.g. substituting solvent-based products with non-solvent products
* giving priority to measures that protect the whole workplace e.g. having good duct extraction rather than issuing dust masks to individual employees. Personal protective equipment should be used as the last resort, and only when it is not possible or practical control the hazard by any other means
* providing appropriate instruction, supervision and information

2.5 Reviewing the assessment

Unless the risk assessment covers a specific event, the risk assessment must specify a date when it should be reviewed. Generally risk assessments should be reviewed at least once per year, or sooner if there has been an accident involving the activity in question, or there have been any changes which make the findings of the assessment no longer valid. For example, if there are changes to personnel, equipment, working methods etc.

2.6 The risk assessment must be dated and state the person or persons undertaking the risk assessment.

2.7 Communicating the findings of the risk assessment to those who need to know.

A crucial element of any risk assessment is that the information on hazards and how the risks will be controlled must be disseminated to all staff involved in the activities and also to those who have a role in implementing the control measures. It is for the local manager or person undertaking the risk assessment to decide how best to communicate the findings of the risk assessment to those who need to know. This could be by means of written instructions, team meetings, emails, toolbox talks etc.

3. Monitoring and reviewing the risk assessment process.

The Health and Safety Co-ordinator in each department or division will submit a return to the Health and Safety Team listing the risk assessments undertaken by their department or division. A sample of the risk assessment return sheet is provided in Annex B.

The Head of Health and Safety will be responsible for keeping a register of all returns and reporting progress to the Health and Safety Committee.

A small working group consisting of members of the risk assessment review group will, in conjunction with the Health and Safety team, conduct an annual audit of a sample of risk assessments listed in the returns, to ensure that risk assessments are being carried out in accordance with this procedure.

Findings of the audit will be reported to the Health and Safety Committee.

4. Model risk assessments

To avoid duplication, and assist staff tasked with undertaking risk assessments, the Health and Safety Team will develop “model templates” for assessments for activities which are common to the majority of departments, e.g. events, handling stationery. When using the model templates, assessors must customise the template to ensure it is applicable to the circumstances in which the activity is undertaken by their department.

Model templates for common tasks will be made available on the Health and Safety website.

5. Risk assessment relating to individuals

Assessment of computer workstations

All employees who habitually use a computer or laptop continuously for an hour or more each day in order to perform their job must undertake a self-assessment of their workstation using the on-line Complywise training and risk assessment system. The system will automatically notify their Health and Safety co-ordinator if there are any concerns identified by the risk assessment. Where concerns cannot be resolved locally, the Health and Safety Team will provide assistance.

Return to work assessments

Line managers are responsible for undertaking risk assessments for employees returning to work after injury or prolonged absences. Line managers should seek advice from the School Occupational Health consultants via their HR partner. The Health and Safety team will also provide assistance.

Pregnancy risk assessment

Where an employee notifies her line manager or HR that she is pregnant, or she is returning to work whilst still breast-feeding, the line manager must review any risk assessment for the tasks /activities undertaken by the individual to ensure that any potential risks that may affect the employee or their unborn child arrange are addressed. If either the employee or the line manager has any concerns, they should seek advice from the Health and Safety Team.

Young persons and persons on work experience or work placement.

Due to inexperience and immaturity which may affect their awareness of risks, young persons aged 18 years or younger are deemed to be especially at risk. The relevant line manager must arrange for a specific risk assessment to be undertaken where anyone aged 18 years or younger undertakes any work either on a temporary work experience placement or is employed on a permanent basis. The model template on the Health and Safety website can be used for work experience in low risk environments such as offices. Where a young person is employed in an environment where they may be expected to operate machinery or use hand tools e.g. an apprenticeship for a trade, then a more detailed risk assessment will be required. The line manager should seek advice from the Health and Safety Team.

Individual Stress risk assessment

Where an individual employee reports that they are experiencing work related stress or the Line Manager has reasonable evidence to suspect that a member of staff is experience work related stress, the Line Manager should seek advice from their HR Partner regarding conducting a stress risk assessment. The Health and Safety team will also provide assistance.

ANNEX 1

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION CHECKLIST

When undertaking a risk assessment assessors should consider the following:

a) How is the activity carried out? If there are written procedures, do staff deviate from written or standard procedures? If so why?

b) Does the working environment contribute to the hazard e.g. temperature, lighting, ventilation?

c) Does the state of the building contribute to the level of risk, e.g. poorly maintained floors, stairs, doors?

d) Are there any other factors that cause persons to slip, trip or fall, e.g. spillages or trailing cables?

e) Does the activity involve the use of plant or machinery or equipment? If so, have staff been trained to use it safely, and are there any limitations on the use of this equipment e.g. internal use only, load restrictions? Are such restrictions being followed?

f) Electrical safety – where portable electrical appliances are used are they in a good condition? Have they been PAT tested? Are there sufficient sockets? In case of events - will equipment be brought into the School by third parties? If so is it maintained in a safe condition? Checks should be made with Estates to ensure that the equipment’s power requirements do not overload the building electrical systems.

g) Is there a danger of being injured, trapped or struck by objects or equipment?

h) Does the activity involve the use of hand tools? Are these suitable for the job and in good condition?

i) Does the activity involve exposure to chemicals, dust, fumes, noise or vibration?

j) Does the task require the use of access equipment or working at heights?

k) Does the work result in persons having to adopt poor posture or cramped or awkward working positions?

l) Is there a risk of violence to staff?

m) Are staff ever required to work alone?

n) Does the activity involve manual handling e.g. the moving or lifting of loads or persons?

o) Is there a risk of fire, flooding, spillage or gas leak? What precautions are taken to prevent such occurrences? what contingency arrangements are there in place to deal with these types of emergencies?

p) Does the work involve vehicle movements?

This is not an exhaustive list and is only meant to act as a prompt in the process of identifying hazards, loss or damage that could occur.

**Annex 2**

**Risk Assessment Information**

The purpose of this form is to collect information on risk assessments required under Health and Safety legislation conducted at a department level. Information is only required in relation to activities / tasks undertaken or organised by the relevant department or section. It is not necessary to include any information about risk assessments which relate to individuals such as individual workstation assessments (DSE), pregnancy risk assessments, return to work assessments etc.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Dept. or Section | | | |  | | | |
| Name of person completing this form | |  | | Designation or job title | |  | |
| List of risk assessments completed by Department: | | | | | | | |
| Task or activity covered by risk assessment | Who undertook assessment  (please include role or job title) | | Date of assessment and last review. | | Where are the records held e.g. on shared drive, hard copies | | How are findings of risk assessment communicated to persons who need to know? e.g. via Notice boards, email, team meetings |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  |