

Example risk assessment for a call centre

Setting the scene

The office manager carried out the risk assessment at this call centre, which occupies a single storey of a ten-storey office block. Forty staff work at the call centre, 20 work part-time and two members of staff are wheelchair users. Staff turnover is 30% per year.

The centre is staffed from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. The offices contain typical office furniture and equipment. There is a staff kitchen, where drinks can be prepared and food heated, and toilet and washing facilities.

Important reminder

This example risk assessment shows the kind of approach a small business might take. Use it as a guide to think through some of the hazards in your business and the steps you need to take to control the risks. Please note that it is not a generic risk assessment that you can just put your company name on and adopt wholesale without any thought. This would not satisfy the law – and would not be effective in protecting people.

Every business is different – you need to think through the hazards and controls required in your business for yourself.

How was the risk assessment done?

The manager followed the guidance in *Five steps to risk assessment* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf).

- 1 To identify the hazards, the manager:
 - looked at HSE's web pages on health and safety in offices, and at advice on preventing slips and trips in call centres (published by the North West Contact Centre Project). They also looked at the HSE advice to local authorities 'Advice regarding call centre working practices', and at HSE's disability and risk assessment web pages;
 - walked around the office, noting what might pose a risk and taking HSE's guidance into consideration;
 - talked to the safety representative, supervisors and staff, including those who are wheelchair users, to learn from their experiences and to listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety issues; and
 - looked at the accident book, to learn about previous problems.
- 2 The manager then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
- 3 For each hazard, the manager wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards. These controls were then compared to the good practice guidance on HSE's website. Where existing controls were not considered good enough, the manager wrote down what else needed to be done to control the risk.
- 4 The manager then implemented the findings of the risk assessment. This involved setting out when the actions that were needed would be done and who would do them. These actions were then ticked off as they were completed. The risk assessment was discussed with staff, to check they understood it. The risk assessment was displayed in the staffroom and made part of the induction process for new staff.
- 5 The manager decided to review and update the risk assessment every year or straightaway if any major changes in the workplace happened.

Company name: Smith's Call Centre Date of risk assessment: 1/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Display screen equipment	Staff may suffer posture problems and pain, discomfort or injuries (eg to the hands and arms) from overuse or improper use, or from poorly designed workstations or work environments. Headaches or sore eyes can occur, eg if the lighting is poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ DSE training and assessments of workstation from CD ROM carried out by all new starters early on in induction. Any actions to be carried out ASAP. ■ Reassessment to be carried out at any change to work feature, eg equipment, furniture or the work environment such as lighting. ■ Workstation and equipment set to ensure good posture and to avoid glare and reflections on the screen. ■ Shared workstations are assessed for all users. ■ Work planned to include regular breaks or change of activity. ■ Lighting and temperature suitably controlled. ■ Adjustable blinds at window to control natural light on screen. ■ Noise levels controlled. ■ Eye tests provided for those who need them, dutyholder to pay for basic spectacles specific for VDU use (or portion of cost in other cases). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supervisors to make sure staff continue to get breaks away from the screen. 	Supervisors	4/10/07	4/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check that identified actions from self-assessments are followed up ASAP. 	Manager	21/10/07	21/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to tell their manager of any pain they have that may be linked to computer use. 	Manager	21/10/07	21/10/07
Stress	All staff could be adversely affected by factors such as lack of job control (no control over timing/frequency of incoming calls, for example) or verbal abuse from customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Call targets set in consultation with supervisors to ensure they are realistic. ■ Staff get training in the job. ■ Staff can talk to supervisors or manager if they are feeling unwell or ill at ease about things at work. ■ Policy for dealing with verbal abuse from customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff that they can speak confidentially to manager or supervisors (on a no-blame basis!) if they are feeling unwell or ill at ease about things at work. 	Manager	4/10/07	3/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Hearing	Staff could suffer hearing damage if exposed to high noise levels for long periods, or from hearing infections due to poor headset hygiene. Staff may be shocked and startled by exposure to sudden loud sounds while using telephone equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff have a choice of either one or two earpiece headsets. ■ Staff control the volume on their headsets (although volume levels revert to default setting after each call, to prevent volume creep). ■ Staff trained in headset hygiene and ensuring a comfortable fit. ■ Call handlers provided with personal ear pads. ■ Staff trained to report incidents of 'acoustic shock' from loud sounds over telephone equipment. 	■ Provide regular training on volume control.	Manager	21/10/07	21/10/07
			■ Consider whether design of workplace and working practices (eg staff breaks) can be improved or modified to help keep background noise down.	Manager	21/10/07	21/10/07
			■ Check stockroom to ensure there are sufficient spare ear pads.	Manager	21/10/07	21/10/07
			■ Monitor and investigate any reports of acoustic shock.	Manager	Ongoing	
Voice strain	Call handlers may suffer voice problems, including voice loss.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Call handlers trained to position their microphone correctly. ■ Staff trained to clean voice tube. ■ Call handlers encouraged to drink at workstations. ■ Regular breaks away from the workstation to do other jobs, eg paperwork. 	■ Remind staff to clean voice tubes regularly.	Manager	4/10/07	3/10/07
Slips and trips	Staff and visitors may be injured if they trip over objects or slip on spillages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Generally good housekeeping. ■ All areas well lit, including stairs. ■ No trailing leads or cables. ■ Offices cleaned every evening. 	■ Better housekeeping in staff kitchen, eg clear up spills more promptly.	All staff	From now on	01/10/07
			■ Arrange for loose carpet tile on second floor to be repaired/replaced.	Manager	21/10/07	21/10/07
Manual handling, eg of paper, office equipment etc	Staff risk injuries/back pain from handling heavy/bulky objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trolley used to transport boxes of paper etc. ■ Top shelves for light objects only. 	■ Remind staff that they should not try to lift objects that look or feel too heavy for them.	Manager	04/10/07	04/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Working at height, eg putting up decorations	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None at present – staff stand on a chair. ■ Internal windows cleaned by contractor, who uses a stepladder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No more standing on chairs. An appropriate, commercial stepladder will be bought and staff shown how to use it safely. 	Manager	04/10/07	03/10/07
Electrical	Staff could get electrical shocks or burns from using faulty electrical equipment. Electrical faults can also lead to fires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained to spot and report to office administrator any defective plugs, discoloured sockets or damaged cable/equipment. ■ Systems in place for safely taking out of use, and promptly replacing, defective equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask the building landlord when the next safety check of the electrical installation will be done. 	Office administrator	20/3/07	20/3/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Confirm with landlord the system for making safe any damage to building installation electrics, eg broken light switches or sockets. 	Office administrator	20/3/07	20/3/07
Fire	If trapped, staff could suffer from smoke inhalation/burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fire risk assessment done, see www.communities.gov.uk/fire, and necessary action taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None. 		20/3/07	

Assessment review date: 1/7/08