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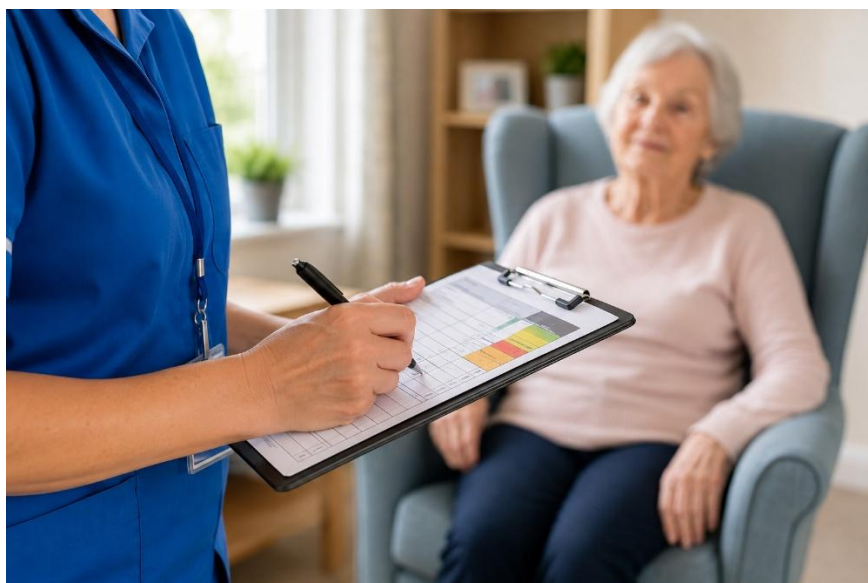
Risk Assessment in Care Settings

A Practical Guide for Care Staff

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Introduction

Risk assessment is a fundamental part of delivering safe, effective and person-centred care. It involves identifying potential hazards, evaluating the likelihood of harm and taking appropriate steps to reduce or manage risks while supporting individuals to live as independently as possible.

In health and social care, risks can affect the people receiving care, care staff, visitors and others within the care environment. Effective risk assessment is not about removing all risk—it is about balancing safety with an individual's rights, choices and independence.

Care staff play an important role in recognising hazards, following agreed risk assessments and reporting any changes that may affect the safety or wellbeing of the individuals they support.

Why This Resource Matters

Understanding risk assessment helps care staff to:

- Recognise hazards that could cause harm.
 - Support safe, person-centred care while promoting independence.
 - Reduce the likelihood of accidents, injuries and incidents.
 - Understand the importance of following agreed risk assessments and care plans.
 - Recognise when risks have changed and need to be reviewed.
 - Protect individuals, colleagues and visitors.
 - Meet legal, health and safety and professional responsibilities.
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Key Message

Risk assessment is about making informed decisions that balance safety with independence. By identifying hazards, following agreed control measures and reporting concerns promptly, care staff help create safer environments while respecting the rights, dignity and choices of the individuals they support.

Understanding Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what could cause harm and the measures that can be taken to reduce or manage that risk. It helps ensure that care is delivered safely while allowing individuals to maintain as much independence and choice as possible.

Hazards may be found in many areas of health and social care, including the physical environment, equipment, moving and handling activities, medication, infection prevention, lone working and an individual's changing health or behaviour.

Risk assessments should always be person-centred, taking account of the individual's needs, abilities, preferences and wishes. They should also be reviewed regularly and whenever circumstances change.

Managing Risks in Practice

Care staff help manage risks by:

- Following agreed care plans and risk assessments.
- Identifying hazards before they cause harm.
- Reporting changes in an individual's condition or environment.
- Using equipment safely and as instructed.
- Following safe moving and handling procedures.
- Encouraging independence while providing appropriate support.
- Recording and reporting accidents, incidents and near misses promptly.
- Working with colleagues to reduce risks and improve safety.

Effective risk management protects individuals while supporting positive outcomes and maintaining dignity and independence.

Remember

Not all risks can be eliminated, and removing every risk may reduce an individual's independence and quality of life. Good risk assessment is about finding the right balance between protecting people from harm and supporting them to make informed choices, remain independent and live as safely as possible.

Professional Responsibilities

Every care worker has a responsibility to identify potential hazards, follow agreed risk assessments and contribute to creating a safe environment for everyone. Effective risk management helps prevent harm while ensuring individuals continue to receive person-centred care that promotes choice, dignity and independence.

As a care professional, you should always:

- Follow agreed care plans and risk assessments.
- Be aware of hazards within the care environment.
- Report any changes that may increase risk.
- Use equipment safely and according to training.
- Follow moving and handling, infection prevention and medication procedures.
- Record accidents, incidents and near misses accurately.
- Communicate concerns promptly to your manager or appropriate healthcare professional.
- Participate in regular training and updates relating to health and safety and risk management.

By working proactively, care staff help reduce risks and promote a safe, supportive environment for everyone.

When to Raise Concerns

You should report concerns immediately if:

- An individual's condition or behaviour changes significantly.
- A new hazard is identified within the care environment.
- Equipment is damaged, faulty or unsafe to use.
- Existing risk assessments no longer reflect current circumstances.
- An accident, incident or near miss occurs.
- You believe an individual's safety or wellbeing may be at risk.

Prompt reporting allows risks to be reviewed and appropriate action to be taken before harm occurs.

Good Practice Reminder

Risk assessment is an ongoing process, not a one-off task. By remaining observant, following agreed procedures and reporting concerns promptly, care staff help create safer environments while supporting individuals to live as independently and confidently as possible.

Summary

Risk assessment is an essential part of delivering safe, effective and person-centred care. By identifying potential hazards, assessing risks and following appropriate control measures, care staff help protect individuals, colleagues and visitors while promoting independence, dignity and wellbeing.

Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly and whenever circumstances change. By remaining observant, communicating concerns promptly and following agreed care plans and organisational procedures, care staff play a vital role in reducing harm and maintaining high standards of care.

Risk Assessment Checklist

- ✓ Follow agreed care plans and risk assessments.
 - ✓ Identify and report hazards promptly.
 - ✓ Support individuals to make informed choices while promoting independence.
 - ✓ Use equipment safely and according to training.
 - ✓ Report accidents, incidents and near misses.
 - ✓ Review risks whenever circumstances change.
 - ✓ Follow your organisation's health and safety policies.
 - ✓ Seek advice whenever you are unsure or identify increased risks.
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Further Information

For further guidance on risk assessment in health and social care, visit:

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – Risk Assessment

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/>

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

<https://www.cqc.org.uk>

Skills for Care

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk>

GOV.UK – Health and Safety at Work

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/health-safety-work>

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