

SECTION 2

RISK ASSESSMENTS

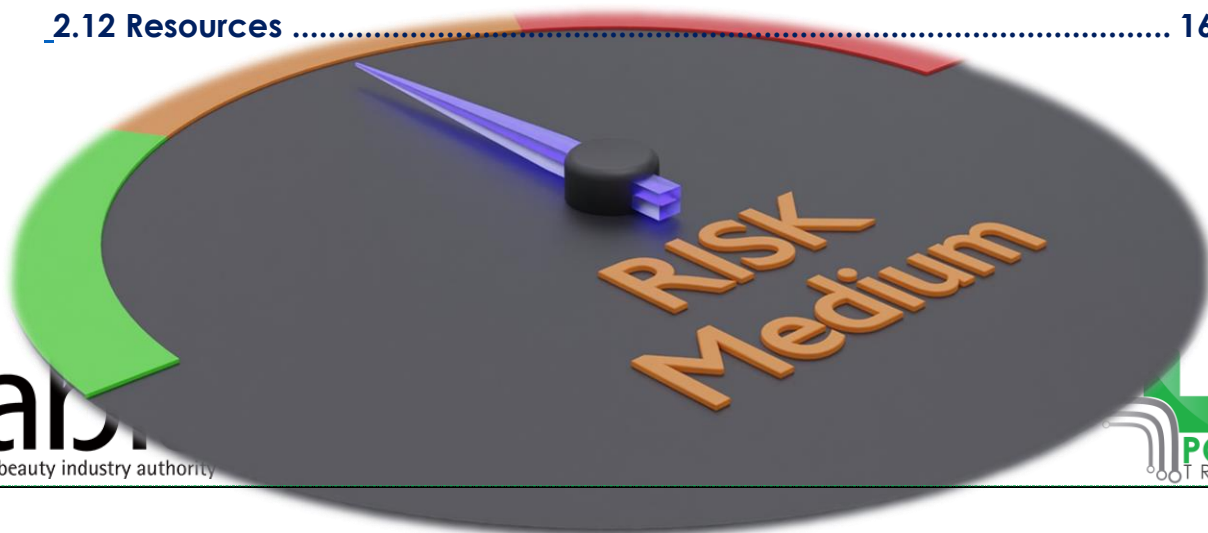


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2.2 What is a risk assessment?

RISK ASSESSMENT

A process that involves identifying all the hazards and who is at risk from them; control measures are then put in place to eliminate the risk or reduce the level of risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

The point of health and safety is **to prevent** injury or illness to people – or harm to property. We manage these risks by doing risk assessments. Risk assessments help us **avoid harm or damage** happening in the first place.

Health and Safety rules may feel like an inconvenience, but in reality, they are there to protect us and those around us. 138 workers were killed due to work in Great Britain in 2023/2024. 87 Members of the public were also killed due to work-related incidents. This begs the question, were there suitable Risk Assessments in place?

A Risk Assessment is not only an important step in ensuring a safe and healthy work environment, it is a legal requirement. It needs to be conducted before employees complete work on current, new or unknown parts, processes or materials. You must consider the possible causes of harm and what steps to take in preventing the harm in the first place. If your business has less than 5 employees, you don't have to document anything but you must have considered hazards and control measures.

A good Risk Assessment will help to prevent accidents and ill health. These not only have the potential to ruin lives, but they could also increase costs to businesses through lost output, compensation claims and higher insurance premiums.

Courts are now being given tougher sentencing guidelines which are now stricter than ever in tackling health and safety legislation breaches. With this in mind, why risk something going wrong?

Before we start, it's crucial to note that contrary to popular belief, spotting potential hazards by conducting a risk assessment is not a way of stopping people from doing things, rather it identifies ways of enabling people to do things in a safe manner.

As part of managing the health and safety of your business, you must control the risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm.



A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather **about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace**. You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees, but your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have covered all you need to.

Think about how accidents and ill health could happen and concentrate on real risks – those that are most likely and which will cause the most harm.

For some risks, other regulations require particular control measures. Your assessment can help you identify where you need to look at certain risks and these particular control measures in more detail. These control measures do not have to be assessed separately.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 stipulate that

“Every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of—

(a) the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and

(b) the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking”



A risk assessment is a process that involves identifying all the hazards, looking to see who is at risk from them; then putting control measures in place to eliminate or reduce the level of risk as far as possible.

The five steps of risk assessment are:

STEP 1 Identify the hazards

STEP 2 Who might be harmed and how

STEP 3 Evaluate the risk

STEP 4 Record your significant findings

STEP 5 Review and update the risk assessments

2.2.1 Competent Person

COMPETENT PERSON

A 'competent person' is someone who has the required training, skills, knowledge and experience required for that particular task.

The employer is responsible for all risk assessments. This does not mean they have to do it themselves, but the responsibility rests with them.

A person doing a risk assessment, has to be a 'competent person'.

A 'competent person' is someone who has the required training, skills, knowledge and experience required for that particular task.

You could appoint (one or a combination of):

- yourself
- one or more of your workers
- someone from outside your business

Usually, managing health and safety isn't complicated and you can do it yourself with the help of your workers. You know your workplace best and the risks associated with it.

If there's a competent person within your workforce, use them rather than a competent person from outside your business.

2.3 STEP 1 Identify the hazards

HAZARD

Something that has the potential to cause harm or damage.

A hazard is something that has the potential to cause harm or damage.

Not all hazards will in practice cause harm or damage – but they have the **potential** to do so.

In STEP 1, we need to look at everything we do in the workplace, and see what might be able to cause harm to a person, or damage to property. What is it about the activities, processes or substances used that could injure your employees or harm their health?

Different ways to check for hazards could be:

- Visually – look around, what can you see?
- Ask – ask other workers and other salon owners; their experiences will be different to yours and give additional insights
- Instruction manuals – these will tell you what potential hazards there are associated with specific pieces of equipment, such as hair dryers
- Accident, ill-health and near-miss records – what incidents have happened, or nearly happened, in the past?
- Look for recognised risks, such as working with chemicals
- Consider non-routine situations, processes that you only do occasionally
- Consider long-term health hazards
- Check the HSE website – they have a host of information freely available!

We'll go into some of the common hazards for hair dressers and barbers in Section 3.

2.4 STEP 2 Who might be harmed and how

The next step is to see who might be harmed by those hazards, and how the harm can happen.

Questions we should ask ourselves are:

- Which workers might be exposed?
- How might they be exposed?
- How often and for how long do they work with the equipment or substance?
- How often and for how long might they be exposed for?
- Who else might be exposed, even if only accidentally?
- What possible injury or illness could they get from this exposure? Think about both short- and long-term injuries or illnesses

Some people may require extra consideration:

- Visitors and new or temporary workers – they are not familiar with the environment, and may be more blasé about hazards and risks
- Apprentices – they are inexperienced, lack awareness of risks and are usually still immature
- Pregnant women and their unborn child(ren)
- Children, disabled people, elderly and other vulnerable adults

For instance, hair clippings on the floor are a hazard, because they can cause someone to slip on them. The hair dressers, clients and their

dependants could slip, trip, fall and hurt themselves. The injuries that could cause range from minor (eg, a grazed knee) to major (eg, breaking a hip), with elderly people more at risk of serious injuries.

Take members of the public into account if they could be harmed by your work activities!

2.5 STEP 3 Evaluate the risks and decide on control measures

RISK

The likelihood (or probability) of the harm or damage being realised, and the severity of the harm or damage that could occur.

Having identified the hazards, you then have to decide how likely it is that harm will occur, i.e. the level of risk and what to do about it. Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. What you must do is make sure you know about the main risks and the things you need to do to manage them responsibly.

Generally, you need to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble. However, you do not need to take action if it would be grossly disproportionate to the level of risk.

Your risk assessment should only include what you could reasonably be expected to know – you are not expected to anticipate unforeseeable risks.

Now we have this information to hand, we look at:

- How likely is the hazard to cause a risk?
- What is the level of that risk?
- Is it possible to remove the hazard?
- If not, is it possible to control the risk so harm is unlikely and/or less severe?
- Are we already doing something about this – and is that effective?

2.5.1 Control measures

CONTROL MEASURES

Actions put in place to eliminate the hazard or minimize the risk caused by that hazard.

Actions that we take to control the risks are called **Control Measures**.

Ideally, we eliminate the risk altogether, by removing the hazard. **If there is no hazard, there is no risk!**

Control measures could be anything from using different equipment instead, to wearing PPE, to having extractor fans and lots, lots more.

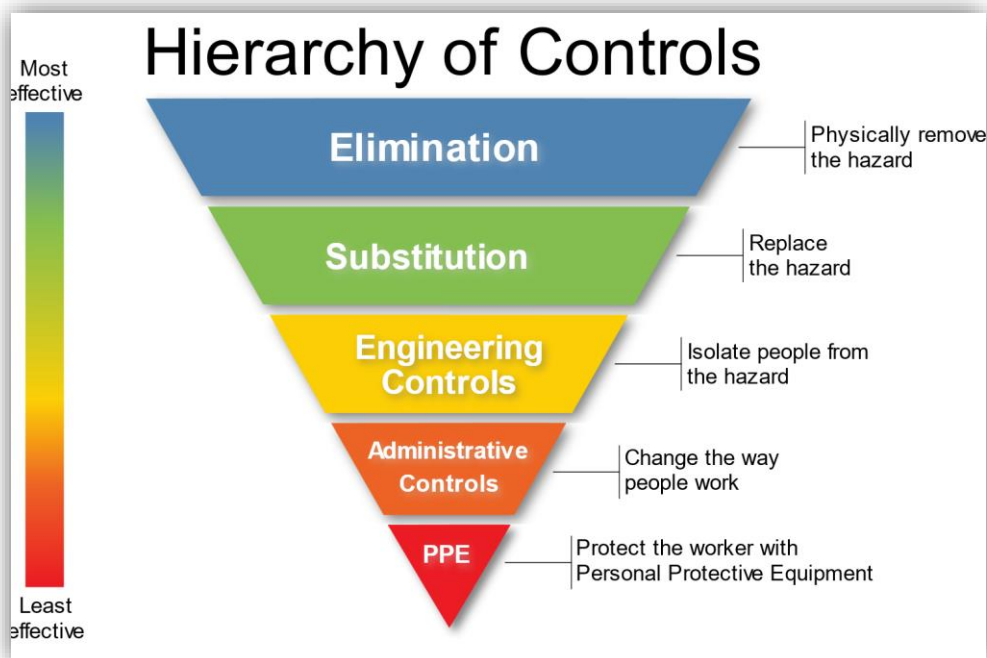
To decide what we need to do, we use the **Hierarchy of Control**.

HIERARCHY OF CONTROL

Actions put in place to eliminate the hazard or minimize the risk caused by that hazard, in the order of most to least effective.

The Hierarchy of Control works by first checking to see if we can eliminate the hazard altogether, down to less effective methods:

- 1) Elimination
- 2) Substitution
- 3) Engineering Controls
- 4) Administrative Controls
- 5) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



2.5.1 Elimination

The best way to not be at risk of illness or injury is by not having the hazard.

Is there a way you could simply remove the hazard, or stop an unsafe work process?

For instance, if a hair dryer gets too hot, it becomes a fire hazard, with serious risks to everyone. Remove the unsafe hair dryer, and use another one that is in good condition and suitable for the job you're using it for.

2.5.2 Substitution

Reduce a risk by substituting a less hazardous process, substance or item of equipment for the one currently used.

For instance, hair dyes contain a lot of harmful chemicals. One of them is phenylenediamine. This chemical is toxic when swallowed, in contact with skin or if inhaled. It can also cause an allergic skin reaction and serious eye irritation. The solution here is to substitute hair dyes containing phenylenediamine for ones that do not – but don't forget to check out the other harmful chemicals as well!

2.5.3 Engineering Controls

An engineering control is a control measure that is physical in nature, including a mechanical device or process. For example, the use of a trolley to move boxes of product, or use of a ventilation system to remove hazardous fumes.

2.5.4 Administrative Controls

Administrative controls are work methods or procedures that are designed to minimise exposure to hazards. For instance, job rotation or using signs to warn people of a hazard.

2.5.5 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The first four control measures are there to eliminate and reduce the risk that the hazard poses as much as is reasonably practicable.

PPE should always be the last control measure to be put in place, and only used when the first four control measures are acted on (where possible). Personal protective equipment does not deal with the hazard itself, but protects the wearer from the hazard. Anyone not wearing that PPE, or not wearing it correctly, will not be protected from the hazard.



2.6 STEP 4 Record your findings and implement them

If your risk assessment identifies a number of hazards, you need to put them in order of importance and address the most serious risks first.

Identify long-term solutions for the risks with the biggest consequences, as well as those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health. You should also establish whether there are improvements that can be implemented quickly, even temporarily, until more reliable controls can be put in place.

Remember, the greater the hazard the more robust and reliable the measures to control the risk of an injury occurring will need to be.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 also clearly state that

*“Where the employer employs five or more employees, he shall record—
(a) the significant findings of the assessment; and
(b) any group of his employees identified by it as being especially at risk.*

So, if your salon is small and there are less than 5 employees, you do not need to record the risk assessment that you have just done. You still **have to do the risk assessment**, but you are not legally obliged to write down your findings.

We still advise you to keep those records. They are a good way of ensuring the health, safety and welfare of everyone under your care, shows proof that you have done the risk assessment and helps to improve your health and safety skills and knowledge.

2.7 STEP 5 Review and update your risk assessments

Now we need to know if our control measures are actually working!

We need to give an appropriate amount of time for the control measures to be put in place, and then to be actively used, before we can check if they are working as intended. Each control measure may need to be reviewed at different times, depending on the above.

Questions to ask are:

- Is the control measure working?
- Has everyone been trained in the use of the control measure?
- Does it have the desired effect?
- If not, what else can we do to make it safer for everyone?
- When should be check again?

Risk assessments also need to be regularly reviewed when:

- An accident or incident has occurred
- Significant changes to the processes or equipment have taken place
- New methods or products are introduced
- Changes have been made to the interior lay-out of the business
- There are new staff members
- (whether employed or self-employed)

2.8 Salon Hazards

The workplace must be assessed continuously by the employer for any dangerous plant, equipment or substances that may cause injury or harm to a person in the workplace. Workers employed in the workplace should also have an awareness of hazards to be able to report any possible dangerous situations. The following are a few of the hazards you may come across in your salon:

Fixtures and fittings forming the salon structure need to be laid out to create easy accessibility for operators. Fixtures and fittings must also be soundly structured and fitted within the salon and maintained in good repair.

Workstations are busy areas, and require enough movement space for the client and the operator to access and use equipment. Congestion can cause accidents. Power points at workstations should be at bench level to prevent equipment cords creating a tripping hazard.

Chairs purchased for a hairdressing salon work area, should be height adjustable to enable the operators to work on clients at a suitable level, preventing possible neck, arm and shoulder complaints.

Stools may be used by operators when performing some hairdressing services. This will relieve stress on the legs and body joints.

Floor surfaces in a salon are used constantly by clients and operators and subjected to spillages of water and chemicals as well as hair clippings. It is important that hair clippings and any spillages are removed quickly to prevent any person slipping over

Lighting must be sufficient in the salon area for operators to work efficiently and safely. Poor lighting may also cause eye strain and confuse the operator in colour choice selection for clients.

Trolleys are used constantly by operators and therefore must be of a suitable height, moveable, and stable so as not to tip over causing injury to any person. Keep the wheels of trolleys free of hair to prevent them from tipping over.

Tools of Trade consideration must be given to ease of manipulation of our tools of trade. Continuous use of these tools requires that the size and weight of tools must be considered to avoid stress on fingers, wrists, arms, shoulders etc. The aim is to reduce any possible stress on the body by correct choice of equipment. Training in the use of sharp equipment (scissors and razors) is essential for operator and client safety. Special bins should be allocated for the disposal of sharp blades and razors.

Electrical equipment must be checked and maintained in good repair to avoid risk of injury. Electrical equipment must also be kept away from water. Operators must have dry hands when using any type of electrical equipment. Do not leave electrical cords dangling in busy works areas creating a hazard. Now we need to know if our control measures are actually working!

Clean air is a requirement for workplace health and safety. Vapours and chemical dusts may be a health risk. Adequate extraction for both harmful dusts and vapour is necessary at the site of production and good ventilation should be provided within the salon.

2.8.1 Portable and fixed beds

- ❖ Read manufactures instruction manual
- ❖ Portable tables should only be used by trained personnel
- ❖ Maintain the table periodically. Make sure all screws are secure and the cable has not deteriorated or frayed
- ❖ Check that there are no cracks in the structure
- ❖ Ensure that legs are adjusted to the operators working height and the locking button on each leg is protruding fully from the hole
- ❖ Test the table stability by applying pressure with both hands before allowing the client on the table
- ❖ Make sure when using the table that all four legs are on a solid surface and at the same level
- ❖ Cleaning the vinyl must be done with warm soapy water and wiped dry, noting alcohol-based products could damage the vinyl
- ❖ Ensure handles are flipped back whilst folding or they may become damaged
- ❖ When transporting portable tables ensure the appropriate heavy duty transit cover is used to protect the vinyl from damage

Control Measures

- ❖ Moving parts of appliances should be positioned or enclosed to prevent access by any person, or any part of a person, so as to prevent injury. Where guards or enclosures are provided, they should have adequate mechanical strength and only be detachable using a special tool
- ❖ Access to the seats should be restricted to the operator and client only. This might be achieved through the placement of physical barriers or by ensuring that only operators and clients have access to cutting or washing areas

- ❖ Under no circumstance should a child be present in a room in which electrically adjustable treatment chairs or seats exist except:
 - as a client on the appliance
 - as an age-appropriate child who can be safely accommodated in a playpen
- ❖ During chair height adjustment, the operator must check below the chair and ensure that children (other than those being treated at the time), are not in the vicinity of the movement
- ❖ Any operating controls should be positioned so the opportunity for unintentional activation is avoided
- ❖ Employers who operate these appliances must ensure adequate training is given to operators and workers on how the appliance works, load limits, and all designer or manufacturer built-in safety features. This includes power source isolation, thermal overload protection and reset procedures
- ❖ Washing seats and cutting chair manufacturers and suppliers, employers and workers and owners who operate these appliances must assess these hazards and implement appropriate control measures to eliminate or minimise the risks from these hazards

2.9 Accident Reporting

The **R**eporting of **I**njuries, **D**iseases, and **D**angerous **O**ccurrences **R**egulations 1995 (RIDDOR) require employers to report certain accidents and diseases to their local authority.

Not all accidents need to be reported – a RIDDOR report is only required when:

- the accident is work related, and
- it results in a reportable injury



Reportable injuries are:

- the death of any person
- certain specified, reportable injuries to workers
- incidents that result in someone being away from work, or unable to do their normal work, for more than 7 consecutive days as a result of that incident – this includes days that someone may not normally have been expected to work, such as weekends, days off or the days part-time workers do not normally work
- occupational diseases (such as occupational asthma or occupational dermatitis)

- Occupational cancer
- Biological agents (such as legionnaires' disease)
- Accidents to people other than workers, if they arise from your work activities and processes, resulting in an injury and the person is taken to hospital for treatment (not if that person is only taken to hospital as a precaution).

This must be work related and not a medical emergency: a heart attack or similar is not reportable. If a client faints and bangs their head and goes to hospital this would not be reportable but if they tripped over a loose wire and went to hospital with an injury this would be



Over 3-day incapacitation does not need to be reported, but it must be recorded.

Some dangerous occurrences also need to be reported. Dangerous occurrences are certain incidents with a high potential to cause death or serious injury

2.10 Employers' Liability Insurance

Employers' Liability (EL) insurance is a legal requirement (under the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969) for employers in the UK to protect against the risk of employee injury or illness. It covers compensation for employees who are injured or become ill while working, or during the course of their employment.

You are only required by law to have employers' liability insurance for people who you employ under a contract of service or apprenticeship.

Whether or not you need employers' liability insurance for someone who works for you depends on the terms of your contract with them. This contract can be spoken, written or implied. It does not matter whether you usually call someone an employee or self-employed or what their tax status is. What matters is the real nature of your relationship with the people who work for you and the nature and degree of control that you have over the work they do.

Family businesses, where all employees are closely related to you, and which are not Limited Companies, are exempt from the need to have Employers' Liability Insurance.

You must be insured for at least £5 million. However, you should look carefully at your risks and liabilities and consider whether you need insurance cover of more than £5 million. In practice, most insurers offer cover of at least £10 million.

If your business is part of a group, a policy for employers' liability insurance can be taken out for the group as a whole. In this case, the group as a whole, including subsidiary companies, must have cover of at least £5 million.



You must display a copy of the certificate of insurance where your employees can easily read it. You are also allowed to display it electronically – in which case employees need to clearly know where to find it and have reasonable access to it.

2.11 Generic Risk Assessment Form

You can use this risk assessment form from HSE as a template.

There is a link to this document in [2.12 Resources](#), and templates in [SECTION 20 - FORMS AND TEMPLATES](#).



Risk assessment template

Company name:

Assessment carried out by:

Date of next review:

Date assessment was carried out:

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done

More information on managing risk: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/

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2.12 Resources

For more information, see

[Risk assessment template](#) (HSE)

INDG163, Risk Assessment. A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace (HSE)

[INDG232 Consulting employees on health and safety](#) (HSE)

[INDG453 Reporting accidents and incidents at work](#) (HSE)

[HSG263 Involving your workforce in health and safety: Guidance for all workplaces](#) (HSE)

[HSE40 Employers' Liability \(Compulsory Insurance\) Act 1969: A guide for employers](#) (HSE)

