

# Capacity Building Project



## GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDIES

### Case Study 3

**The Organisation:**

ECHG (English Churches Housing Group)

**The Challenge:**

To continuously improve risk assessments undertaken in a local branch of a national organisation

**The Response:**

Risk assessment training and the implementation of a structured programme of risk assessment

**Examples of Good Practice:**

1. A comprehensive programme of risk assessment
2. Annual review of risk assessments
3. Continuous improvement through training

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## **The Organisation:** ECHG (English Churches Housing Group)

Cangle Foyer is a local project in Haverhill run by the English Churches Housing Group (ECHG), one of the country's largest housing associations. The ECHG provides homes for over 18,000 people through a range of affordable housing services, including sheltered and supported housing.

Foyers are a form of housing for young people where they can be part of a stable and secure community and receive support to move into independent living, learning and work. Cangle Foyer provides supported housing for 30 young people, reducing homelessness and unemployment in Haverhill. Some of the residents have complex support needs and have challenging behaviours, sometimes posing risks to themselves, other residents or staff. Cangle Foyer employs 15 staff who are highly trained to deal with these situations.

## **The Challenge:** To continuously improve risk assessments undertaken in a local branch of a national organisation

As part of a national organisation, the staff at Cangle Foyer have access to some infrastructure and support from head office in relation to health and safety. This takes the form of a detailed health and safety manual that sets out standards expected and procedures to be followed. The rest is left up to local staff, particularly the Services and Administration Manager, who is responsible for all aspects of health and safety at the Cangle Foyer site, including risk assessments.

Previous managers at Cangle Foyer had already conducted a comprehensive range of risk assessments but the new manager coming into post had limited experience of risk assessment. Training in risk assessment was therefore required to ensure the new manager was able to maintain and continuously improve upon the organisation's good health and safety standards.

## **The Response:** Risk assessment training and the implementation of a structured programme of risk assessment

Cangle Foyer's Services and Administration Manager attended SAVO's 2-day risk assessment course and obtained a Certificate in Risk Assessment Principles and Practice from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. This course provided the manager with sufficient knowledge and skills to successfully undertake risk assessments.

Following the training, the manager was able to systematically review existing risk assessments and also to undertake new risk assessments that were not previously considered. For example, there was no risk assessment in place for the whole site of Cangle Foyer. This risk assessment was considered important as the site includes residential units as well as outdoor and communal areas. After completion of the whole site risk assessment, new measures were recommended to make the site safer for staff

working alone. These included a security door (still to be implemented) and six additional CCTV cameras, which are now in place.

## **Examples of Good Practice:**

This case study highlights numerous examples of good practice. As a result of its comprehensive programme of risk assessment, the management of health and safety at Cangle Foyer runs smoothly and contributes to a safe environment for staff and residents.

### **1. A comprehensive programme of risk assessment**

Guidance from ECHG head office requires Cangle Foyer to undertake risk assessments in a range of key areas including fire safety, manual handling, display screen equipment, COSHH and new or expectant mothers. Health and safety inspections of offices and residents' rooms are conducted quarterly to identify potential new risks. Risk assessments for lone working, personal safety and stress are considered particularly important because the work at Cangle Foyer involves working with potentially violent residents with a range of challenging behaviours.

The risk assessment on stress is highlighted here as it is a major risk in the workplace that is frequently overlooked by employers. Work-related stress is a leading cause of illness and absence from work, resulting in lost productivity and low staff morale. This can have an impact both financially and on the quality of services provided. Cangle Foyer staff face a high level of stress from working with residents who are at times chaotic, abusive and violent. Control measures are in place to prevent work-related stress include training and information for staff on dealing with violence and aggression, stress management training, access to a helpline and face-to-face counselling, if required.

Risk assessment principles are increasingly being applied to the Foyer's work with residents, as well as to the health and safety of staff. All risks are considered when potential new residents are being assessed for suitability, but since undertaking the risk assessment training, the Services and Administration Manager has also introduced risk assessments on individual residents, when required. The aim of these risk assessments is to prevent incidents occurring that may have a serious impact on residents and staff. For example, if a member of staff became aware that a resident is at risk of suicide or self-harm, a risk assessment would be undertaken for that resident and appropriate control measures implemented, such as offering counselling to the resident.

### **2. Annual review of risk assessments**

Cangle Foyer's comprehensive programme of risk assessment includes regular review of the assessments. These are undertaken on an annual basis and on an ad hoc basis if circumstances change or if the measures implemented to control risks prove to be inadequate. New staff are given the opportunity to express their views, for example in relation to their safety when working alone.

Review of risks assessments frequently result in new control measures being implemented, showing the way risk assessment is a process of continuous improvement. For example, in reviewing the fire risk assessment, it was decided to provide all residents with ashtrays and to have spare fire extinguishers available in the event that fire extinguishers are awaiting renewal after being set off. Improvements were also made to the risk assessments for trips away. These risks assessments are now being more fully thought through to ensure the safety of staff and residents. New control measures include requirements for staff to ring in so as to maintain contact with staff back at Cangle Foyer.

### 3. Continuous improvement through training

All staff receive training, instruction and information about health and safety at induction. This includes ensuring that they understand how the principles of risk apply in their day-to day work. Members of staff responsible for lifting are given training in manual handling as this minimises the risk of back injuries. Ongoing training and information is provided to ensure staff are aware of any new risks or new measures implemented to control risks.

In addition to undertaking SAVO's 2-day risk assessment course, the Services and Administration Manager also undertook further training in specialist risk assessment. This training covered the separate risk assessments that are required for COSHH (hazardous substances), DSE (display screen equipment) and manual handling. Following the COSHH training, information was provided to staff on hazardous cleaning products in easy, understandable language. This information is displayed at the point of use and copies are kept in the first aid box.

The organisation's commitment to health and safety training is ongoing. There are plans for the Services and Administration Manager to undertake a national diploma in occupational safety and health from NEBOSH (National Examinations Board in Occupational Safety and Health).

#### **Sharing the Learning:**

ECHG have achieved excellent standards in their health and safety risk assessment. These standards would not be difficult to achieve for any organisation willing to undertake the necessary training.

#### **Lessons Learnt**

A comprehensive programme of risk assessment will ensure that all risks are identified and all people affected by your activities are safe.

Assessing risks of work-related stress is an important risk assessment that should be covered by all voluntary organisations.

Risk assessment principles can be applied to keep customers/clients safe in the same way that they are applied to staff.

Risk assessments should be reviewed annually to keep them up to date. Additional reviews may be required if circumstances change.

SAVO's 2-day risk assessment course provides sufficient training for small voluntary groups to undertake workplace risk assessments.

A health and safety induction should be provided for all staff/volunteers. Ongoing training and information ensures continuous improvement of health and safety standards.

#### **Questions To Consider**

- Have you undertaken risk assessments for all risks relating to your activities and premises?
- Are your staff/volunteers at particular risk of work-related stress?
- Have you done a risk assessment for stress?
- Do you undertake risk assessments in relation to customers/clients whenever their health and safety is at risk?
- Do you regularly review your risk assessments?
- Are risk assessments updated if circumstances change or control measures are inadequate?
- Are staff who are responsible for risk assessment adequately trained?
- Are staff (and volunteers) given a proper health and safety induction?
- Is ongoing training and information on health and safety provided?