

FAQs on Risk Assessments and Responsibility

1. Who is Responsible for Businesses Carrying Out a Risk Assessment and Re-Opening Safely?

It is a business's sole responsibility to complete a suitable and sufficient Risk Assessment to ensure they are safe to re-open and trade – in line with national Government guidance.

As a business your duty is to carry out a Risk Assessment, including COVID as a hazard, and to implement controls prior to opening in the same way as for any other risks in your business.

Whilst considering ventilation controls, you should also be aware of potential noise nuisance. You should mitigate the risks within your Risk Assessment as it could impact on your licencing conditions i.e. your premises licence may include the requirement to shut windows and doors after a certain time.

For further advice or information, please contact your Local Environmental Health Officer or Licencing Officer.

Environmental Health teams at Local Councils are proactively assisting businesses with advice and by producing guidance and tools to help. They cannot however approve or create your risk assessment for you and you do not need to wait for their approval to reopen.

Once open environmental health teams will continue to provide advice where possible, will respond to complaints, will be monitoring compliance and will continue to work within their communities to increase awareness and share best practice.

Note that businesses regulated by the HSE should seek advice from HSE and not the Local Council and any enforcement will be undertaken by HSE in the normal way.

2. Do I Need to Display Any Signage / Posters and Seek Approval or Certification Before Re-Opening?

It is good practice for you to display relevant signage and should be addressed on your Risk Assessment.

3. How Should I Go About Starting My Risk Assessment?

BBfA have provided checklists to help you complete the necessary Risk Assessments. If you work your way through these, they will allow you to start to identify key hazards in your business. Once you have identified the significant hazards, you will be able to identify the necessary control; those which are already in place, if effective should be listed, but if you need to put additional controls in place these can also be listed in your 'additional controls required' section.

If you are already running a business, the concept of Risk Assessment should not be new as you will have been assessing risks from various health and safety aspects anyway. You can also check your local council's website to see if they offer any additional assistance.

4. When Might I Use a Health & Safety Consultant?

You do not have to use a consultant to meet your health and safety obligations. You are the expert for your business, and so should be able to identify the risks and necessary safety measures associated to it.

If you are overwhelmed with the amount of guidance that exists in relation to health and safety, and then you may wish to use a consultant. Ensure that you see copies of their qualifications and that they have Professional Indemnity Insurance. It good practice to see an example of their previous work.

Your Local Environmental Health Officers cannot write your Risk Assessment for you. They may be able to provide further guidance (along with the BBfA toolkit of resources) to be able to write your own.

Criminals are often trying to take advantage of people at a time like this, so please ensure that you always check the credentials of people or companies that contact you. You can protect yourself by **being aware of common scams.**

5. **Once I Have Produced my Risk Assessment, Is That It?**

Where your Risk Assessment identifies the need for control measures, you will need to plan for these measures to be put in place; you may wish to use our action plan template within our toolkit to help you do this.

If the risks identified affect your staff, customers, or anyone else, they may need to be advised, or at least informed whenever they are on your site, i.e. signage.

In addition, Risk Assessments are not passive documents, as in once written, never to be seen again. You will need to review your Risk Assessments either whenever a situation changes, or periodically so as to make sure it, and the safety measures it identifies are still relevant. If there are no changes, then you need do no additional work until the next review, but if there are changes necessary, then these new measures will again need to be implemented and your staff advised again of any changes.

Unless a situation changes, or there has been an accident, Risk Assessments should be fully reviewed on a regular basis. Good practice is annually just so that it can be made sure they remain accurate and relevant. A tip is to put the review date in the footer of the page.

6. **What Should I Communication to Staff?**

It is important that you use all of your existing measures to communicate with your staff – that might be through regular meetings, newsletters and noticeboards. It is particularly important that you also consider any staff that have changed their work base e.g. working from home/remotely and how this needs to be considered with the review of your Risk Assessments.

If your Risk Assessment highlights that key changes are required, or that a particular activity needs to be carried out in a different way, then this must be advised to your staff as a matter of urgency.

There is a wide range of information available on how to communicate with your staff effectively, along with posters and signage you can display at your premises provided by Hertfordshire county council: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/staysafetoolkit It is really important that your staff are engaged with this process and clearly understand what is expected of them.

7. **Where Else Can I Access Support with This?**

If you need further guidance you can contact your Local Environmental Team who will support you where they can, along with directing you to our toolkit, checklists and templates: [Explore the online guidance](#) which is intended to support businesses to complete their Risk Assessment and put new processes and procedures in place to re-open and trade safely.