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Manual Handling Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy applies to all members of staff. Some staff groups have a greater exposure to risk than others, but due to the multifaceted nature of back pain no staff group should consider themselves to be risk free.

Documents and forms referred to in this policy are available at the myhomecare.ie office.

2. Policy objectives

The Policy has two overall objectives:

To ensure that patient handling is undertaken in a safe, dignified and comfortable way.

To minimise the amount of lost time resulting from back and musculo-skeletal injury to staff by:

- Minimising the number of back and musculo-skeletal injuries suffered by employees
- Supporting staff with existing back or musculo-skeletal injuries to remain in work
- Facilitating sustainable, early returns to work for staff absent with back and muscular-skeletal injuries

3. Manual handling

Manual handling is defined as *“any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or by bodily force”* (MHOR). A load can be either animate, for example a person (or a limb), or inanimate, for example an item of equipment.

The PCT will follow the hierarchy of measures as described in the Manual Handling Regulations (MHOR). All staff are supported to;

- Avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable
- Make an assessment of all hazardous manual handling tasks that cannot be avoided
- Reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable.

In determining what is reasonably practicable consideration must be given to;

- The balance between the level of risk to staff and the cost of doing something about it in terms of resources, staff, time and effort
- The degree of the risk arising from the activity in question relative to the benefit to the user of the service involved and the duty of care of the organisation

The first duty is to find ways of avoiding hazardous manual handling tasks. This might require the work to be done differently or the handling to be mechanised, for example by the use of a hoist or other equipment.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment must be carried out for all hazardous manual handling that cannot be reasonably avoided. An ergonomic risk assessment requires consideration of all the risk factors associated with the manual handling operation. This should be done with a systematic approach under the categories of:

- The task being undertaken
- The individual undertaking the task
- The load (which may be a person)

The working environment

Assessments can be specific or generic. Generic risk assessments can be applied to risks that are common to a number of broadly similar activities, for example lifting and carrying normal day to day items from cars into houses. Specific assessments relate to individually identified, hazardous manual handling tasks.

Staff should be familiar with the process of risk assessment and be able to carry out an 'informal' risk assessment in any circumstance. Informal assessments should be made prior to all potentially hazardous manual handling whether or not a formal written assessment has been made. An informal risk assessment will identify the risks that change and cannot always be kept up to date on a written form, for example the level of patient fatigue, the state of the floor at that particular time, (etc).

This policy is to reduce risk from manual handling tasks (that cannot be reasonably avoided) to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable. This is not the same as eliminating risk, which although laudable is rarely possible. A critical part of the risk assessment is to consider the acceptable level of residual risk.

When making this judgement a balance has to be drawn between the degree of risk (as determined by the assessment), the cost of averting the risk, the duty of care, and, when a patient is involved, the choices expressed by the patient. Individual employees should be advised and supported in this by;

- Managers
- Colleagues
- Manual Handling Trainers

4. Recording the assessment

- Significant findings of risk assessments must be recorded and the record kept available, as long as it remains relevant
- An assessment need not be recorded if it could be easily repeated and explained at any time because it is simple and obvious, or because the risk is low, only going to last a short time and the time taken to record it is disproportionate to the value
- Risk assessments for inanimate load handling should be recorded on form the Manual Handling Assessment Form.
- All patients requiring manual handling must have patient handling assessments recorded in their care plans.
- Managers will forward risks rated as unacceptable to the Back Care Advisor who will support the manager to mitigate the risk to an

acceptable level. Risks that cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level will be referred to the HSE.

5. Skills and training

All staff must have the skills necessary to carry out their jobs without unreasonable risk to themselves or others. Training will be provided to make sure that staff obtain and maintain these skills.

All staff are required to undertake refresher training every 2 years. This training will cover general back care, manual handling risk assessment, inanimate load handling and patient handling. The education and training department will maintain a record of all staff who attend this training and will inform managers of staff who have not attended for more than 2 years.

Employers are required by the management to assess the risks to health and safety to staff and others arising from the work they are undertaking. As a consequence of this assessment each service will identify the manual handling skills required by its staff to work in that particular area.

This will determine the level of risk to which staff are exposed. It will also ensure that staff training needs are identified, agreed and provided for so that staff can operate at as low a level of risk as is reasonably practicable.

As part of regular supervision and review all staff will have an annual appraisal of their manual handling capabilities. This appraisal will inform an individual training needs plan agreed between the member of staff and line manager. The Manual Handling Appraisal Form (MH2) will be used to record this process.

It is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure that appraisals are completed for all staff annually.

The appraisal process will identify training that is relevant and timely; line managers and supervisors will use supervision time to complete the forms. Individual members of staff will sign their Manual Handling Appraisal Form which will then be kept by the department as part of the employees' personal record. The completed appraisal form will provide evidence that the employer has:

- Identified the manual handling requirements associated with each post
- Assessed the capabilities of its staff to undertake the roles for which they have been employed
- Provided the necessary training specific to each individual member of staff

New starters must possess skills in the areas identified before working unsupervised in those areas.

All new starters must attend the training general back care, manual handling risk assessment, inanimate load handling and patient handling.

The Organisation will provide training and development in different ways to suit needs of individual staff and different services. This will include;

- Utilising the knowledge and skills of other team members
- Information

6. Manual handling equipment

In many cases manual handling operations require equipment to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. Provision of equipment in itself is rarely sufficient to ensure that the risk is managed effectively. Managers have to ensure that;

- Equipment is appropriate for its intended purpose
- Staff are trained in the use of the equipment

- Staff are aware of the existence of the equipment
- The equipment is stored in a convenient and easily accessible place
- Equipment is available for use when needed
- There is sufficient equipment provided to match demand
- Equipment is serviced and maintained to meet manufacturers' standards.
- Formal training away from the normal workplace

7. Back care and ergonomics

Ergonomics examines the interface between the worker and the job. Ergonomics has twin aims to prevent work related ill health and to maximise productivity through good workplace design and job satisfaction.

Patient handling is recognised as a significant, but not the sole cause of musculo-skeletal injury within the health care sector, hence the existence of specific employment law to try and control its harmful effects.

Recent developments in community care have resulted in health care workers undertaking much less patient handling. Unfortunately they are still exposed to significant risk from many of the tasks that they continue to undertake on a daily basis. Examples of these tasks include;

- Leg ulcer management (community nursing)
- Stroke rehabilitation and therapeutic handling (community stroke teams)
- Bathing and dressing (intermediate care).
- The use of computer workstations and display screens.

The organisation is committed to reducing the likelihood of injury from all tasks undertaken by its employees, not just those for which there is specific legislation.

The Back Care Advisor will provide ergonomic advice and assessment to any organisations employee.

Common referrals for ergonomic advice include;

- Return to work assessment and support
- Workplace assessment
- Seating assessment
- Environmental assessment
- Workplace adaptations

8. Health surveillance

The organisation has a legal duty to provide health surveillance for staff with an identifiable health condition related to their work. Due to the high population incidence of back pain this applies to all of myhomecare.ie staff.

Information gained from this process allows the manager to check the effectiveness of control measures, review the risk assessment and protect individuals at increased risk.

Staff with health problems affecting their ability to undertake their responsibilities must be referred to the Occupational Health Department for expert advice monthly.

9. Monitoring and audit

Heads of service across the organisation are required to complete the Manual Handling Monitoring Checklist and return it to the Risk Advisor by 31st December each year. This will provide assurance to the health and safety Group that the policy is being followed.

Individual line managers, team leaders and any staff with supervisory responsibilities are encouraged to use the manual handling monitoring checklist to ensure they are following correct procedure in their area of responsibility.

The Back Care Advisor, working with the PCT health and safety Group will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by reference to risk management data provided by the Datix system and by sickness absence information provided by Human Resources Department.

The education and training department will monitor the uptake of manual handling appraisal and mandatory training.

An annual audit of compliance with this policy will be completed by the back care advisor by reference to a sample of the documentation held by individual services.

10. Responsibility and accountability.

The organisation recognises its responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.

The organisation is committed to do all that it is reasonable to prevent personal injury and protect everyone from foreseeable work hazards, and to support staff who have back or musculo-skeletal conditions to stay at, or return to work.

Heads of Service

Heads of service must ensure that manual handling monitoring checklist are returned to the Risk Advisor by 31st December each year

Managers

Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are adequately skilled and have the necessary information to undertake their roles. These responsibilities include:

- Assessing the skills of their staff to carry out the work for which they are employed (using the process described above)
- Ensuring that new staff do not commence their duties until they have the appropriate skills to do so
- Allowing sufficient time for staff to undertake training during their working hours
- Ensure all patients with manual handling needs have current and accurate client handling assessments in their care plans
- Maintain accurate load handling assessments for all non-client tasks with significant risks of injury
- Ensure that manual handling equipment is managed in accordance with this policy
- Addressing known problems in the workplace that are contributing to musculo-skeletal disorders for staff
- Inform the Back Care Advisor of staff who have been absent from work due to musculo-skeletal disorders for more than 10 working days
- Ensure that staff adheres to the policy. Breaches of policy should be dealt with by performance or disciplinary procedures
- Ensure that Manual handling appraisal forms are completed and acted on for all staff

Staff

Ensure all staff attends back care and manual handling training appropriate to their risk profile and training needs analysis;

- Assess risk before undertaking any manual handling hazardous tasks
- Be available and willing to participate in and contribute to manual handling training sessions. For certain groups of staff this will involve practical participation and repeated practice

- Inform their manager of any health condition that could affect their ability to safely carry out their job
- Conform to agreed manual handling action plans
- To only practice within the limits of their knowledge and skills
- Report any injury, incident or untoward occurrence in line with PCT reporting policy

Education and Training Department

- Maintain a system to monitor Personal Development Plans to identify staff who are overdue for a Manual Handling Appraisal
- Maintain a system to monitor the attendance of staff on the mandatory training in general back care, manual handling risk assessment and inanimate load handling
- Inform managers of staff who are overdue Manual Handling Appraisals or mandatory training in general back care, manual handling risk assessment and inanimate load handling
- To maintain details of back care and manual handling training on the PCT intranet site.