

Manual Handling

Guidance

Manual Handling

The term manual handling covers a wide variety of activities including lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling and carrying, all of which present a risk of injury if not managed appropriately. For youth work activities this may include for example, pushing a wheelbarrow during a gardening project, staff carrying equipment or resources from their car to a venue, leaving and/or clearing tables and chairs from a multi-use indoor space after a meal.

The [Manual Handling Operations Regulations](#) require employers to avoid, assess and reduce the risk of injury from manual handling. Youth work organisations need to be aware of their responsibilities in this regard and should familiarise themselves with the available guidance on the [HSE website](#) which supports organisations to identify how to avoid hazardous manual handling, assess risk, and reduce the likelihood of injury.

The Manual Handling Regulations set out a clear hierarchy of measures that employers should follow to help prevent and manage the risks from hazardous manual handling:

- avoid hazardous manual handling operations, 'so far as reasonably practicable';
- assess the risk of injury to workers from any hazardous manual handling that can't be avoided;
- reduce the risk of injury to workers from hazardous manual handling to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable.

Assessing the risk

Youth work programmes and services should be designed to minimise the need for any manual handling by workers or young people. Where manual handling is required, this should always be assessed with mitigations in place to ensure it is managed effectively.

When assessing the risks associated with manual handling, consideration should be given to each of the following:

- the task, including the pace, frequency or duration of the work, and any awkward movements including twisting or lifting/lowering away from the body
- the load to be lifted or carried including how easy it is to handle and its shape, not just the weight
- the environment (i.e. slippery floors, uneven terrain and/or trip hazards)
- the person(s) lifting or carrying and individual capacity (to include appropriate training as necessary).
 - Additional caution should be given to situations where young people may be conducting an activity which falls within the scope of the manual handling regulations. Risks associated with manual handling activity for young people should be avoided if possible and if it cannot, be mitigated as far as possible as young people have additional risk factors to consider including the development of growing bodies and awareness of personal capabilities.
- Any materials, handling equipment or aids used

Mechanical assistance (i.e. a sack trolley or wheelbarrow) should be used where feasible and other measures should be considered where possible. Effective control measures may include:

- Reduce weights and/or size of object to increase ease of carrying. Can the load be broken down into smaller/lighter loads?
- Reduce distance to travel. E.g. can a car/vehicle be moved closer to the building for loading/unloading?
- Minimise bending and reaching. Can tables or other platforms be used to lift from or set down on to?
- Minimise workload to guard against fatigue. Can other individuals help to reduce the load on any one person?
- Build in regular breaks. Can more time be allowed for the task to prevent things being done too quickly?
- Ensure any route is well lit, is clear of trip hazards and obstruction free. Can the route be walked in advance without carrying any load and can any doors be propped open without posing any other health and safety risk?

The HSE's [brief guide](#) provides further detail with regards to assessing the risk and provides useful tools to help to assess risks associated with: lifting and lowering; pushing and pulling; carrying; and handling whilst seated.

Briefing and training

Where manual handling cannot be avoided, workers and young people should be briefed and trained in [good handling techniques](#). Organisations should not however rely upon training alone to minimise the risks of manual handling. The first objective should always be to design the handling operations to be as safe as reasonably practicable. [Briefing](#), training and instruction should be used to further manage the risk where the task cannot be avoided and operational controls have been applied.

The information covered by manual handling briefings and training should be specific to the task and should include:

- Specific identified risk factors and how injuries may occur
- The controls in place, appropriate to the specific task and environment
- The safe use of any mechanical aids if relevant
- Explanation and demonstration of good handling techniques
- [How to report concerns, injuries and incidents](#)