

Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

Version 19/04/23

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Frequently Asked Questions

A. Objectives and Uncertainty

1. What do we mean by objectives?

The **Key Messages** section of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'As a health service, our objectives relate both to our day-to-day mission to provide, the highest quality health and social care services for the population of Ireland and to our longer term ambition that these services and the experience of those waiting for, or who are receiving care, become demonstrably better. Uncertainty about the future poses the single greatest barrier to us meeting both our day-to-day and longer term objectives. Uncertainty by its nature cannot be prevented and the only certainty is that situations will arise that threaten our ability to achieve those objectives.'

Simply put, objectives provide clarity on the organisation's direction and focus the efforts of the organisation on its most important priorities. The HSE has clear objectives which are articulated in the **Corporate Plan**, with the **National Service Plan** setting out how these objectives will be progressed over each annual cycle.

2. What do we mean by uncertainty?

The **Key Messages** section of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'Uncertainty: The future, whether that is tomorrow or next year, is uncertain. What has happened over the past year that we hadn't expected twelve months ago? Unexpected situations will always arise and they can prevent or hinder us from doing what we had planned to do. In our jobs this means preventing or hindering us in delivering on our core mission and objectives'

Simply put, even the best organisational decisions and plans are implemented in the future, whether that is tomorrow or next year. The future by its nature is uncertain.

B. Risk and Risk Management

1. What is risk?

Section 1.4 **Key Definitions** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 defines risk as the '*effect of uncertainty on objectives*'. In the context of the HSE and its services, it is any condition, circumstance, event or threat which may impact the achievement of objectives and/or have a significant impact on the day-to-day operations. This also includes failing to maximise any opportunity that would help the HSE or service meet its objectives.'

Simply put, a risk is therefore by definition a threat to us achieving an objective.

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2. What has uncertainty got to do with risk?

The **Key Messages** section of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states ‘Uncertainty: The future, whether that is tomorrow or next year, is uncertain. What has happened over the past year that we hadn’t expected twelve months ago? Unexpected situations will always arise and they can prevent or hinder us from doing what we had planned to do. In our jobs this means preventing or hindering us in delivering on our core mission and objectives. Predicting the future: Uncertainty means the future is difficult to predict. Attempting to predict it and prepare for it, can seem like wasted effort as many of today’s predictions may never happen. However, if they do, they can have catastrophic consequences. When we recognise what could go wrong and the threat this poses, our focus is then on reducing the likelihood of these events occurring or should they occur, minimising their impact.’

Simply put, because the future is uncertain so are the threats or risks we will face. This is further complicated by the fact that the number and type of possible risks is limitless. For this reason, we define the scope of risk to those threats which have the potential to prevent or derail our efforts to deliver on our objectives. This allows us to target our efforts on those threats or risks, which if not effectively managed, will have the highest impact.

3. What is risk management?

Section 2.1 **Scope, Context and Criteria** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states that ‘the HSE recognises that risk management is good management practice and in accordance with effective corporate governance as it progresses the achievement of both strategic and operational objectives, and improves decision-making.’

Simply put, each one of us unconsciously and naturally manage **risks** every day, in our homes, as we travel and at work. Risk management simply provides a structured approach to anticipating those threats, assists us in identifying the most effective way to manage them and provides the means by which we can measure how successful we have been in our efforts to reduce risk.

4. Do we have a responsibility to manage risk?

Section 1.5 **Roles and Responsibilities** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 sets out the roles and responsibility in relation to risk management in the HSE, from the HSE Board to individual staff members.

Simply put, as an organisation we have a duty to act in the best interests of those who rely on our services and the State who has entrusted us with significant resources and responsibilities to ensure we deliver our objectives as effectively as possible. Not to do so is a failure of governance.

5. What does “managing the effect of uncertainty” mean?

The **Key Messages** section of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023

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states 'Uncertainty: The future, whether that is tomorrow or next year, is uncertain. What has happened over the past year that we hadn't expected twelve months ago? Unexpected situations will always arise and they can prevent or hinder us from doing what we had planned to do. In our jobs this means preventing or hindering us in delivering on our core mission and objectives. Predicting the future: Uncertainty means the future is difficult to predict. Attempting to predict it and prepare for it, can seem like wasted effort as many of today's predictions may never happen. However, if they do, they can have catastrophic consequences. When we recognise what could go wrong and the threat this poses, our focus is then on reducing the likelihood of these events occurring or should they occur, minimising their impact.'

Simply put, consider what needs to go right to be able to consistently provide the safest, highest quality health and social care services and what **risk events** could arise that would prevent this?

6. What is a risk event?

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 defines a 'risk event' as 'occurrence of a particular set of circumstances that was earlier deemed only a possibility. Depending on the nature of the risk event, it may be referred to as an incident or disaster. In principle any risk that materialises is a risk event. E.g. Cyber Incident or Natural Disaster.'

Simply put, a predicted risk becomes an event when it occurs. That is, it is a tangible event, you experience it or feel it. Before COVID-19, the risk or threat of a pandemic was an example of a predicted future event. However, with the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020 it very much became a reality, the predicted future event materialised. It became real.

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7. How do I describe a risk?

Section **3.2 Procedure: Risk Description** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states that ‘An accurate and specific risk description will assist you in identifying what needs to be in place to manage the risk whereas a vague or poorly defined risk will leave you grappling at the next step in the process. The risk description is a structured statement of risk usually containing three elements: risk event, cause and impact.’

The procedure document sets out the steps to follow in arriving at a good risk description.

Simply put, take your time and ask yourself ‘what is the risk event [possible future event/threat] that if it were to become a reality [materialise] could delay or prevent me from consistently providing the safest, highest quality health and social care services?’

In coming up with a good risk description there are three components. These are;

- the **risk event** that could threaten the achievement of my objective
- the **cause** of the risk event;
- the **impact** or consequence of that risk.

You may find it beneficial to follow the above template in describing your risks, setting them out as follows:

	Risk Event	Cause of the Risk	Impact or Consequence
Expressed as...	There is a risk of/to/ that [event]....	... due to [cause],	... resulting in [impact/consequence]
Step 1	Capture and describe the Risk event	Capture and describe Source or cause	Capture and describe the Impact or consequence.
Formula	Risk Description = Risk event + source or cause + impact or consequence.		
Step 2	There is a risk of/to [Risk Event].....due to [Source of risk].....resulting in [Impact]		

C. Identifying Risks

1. How do we identify risks?

Section **3.1 Procedure: Risk Identification** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides guidance on risk identification. It states ‘there can be several approaches to identifying the risk, areas of impact, events, their causes, and potential impact. You should also aim to identify the results associated with not pursuing an opportunity, that is, the risk of doing nothing and missing an opportunity. The HSE uses a combination of top-down and bottom-up risk assessments for this.’

Simply put, start by identifying the potential threats to our objectives, particularly those that are the most likely to occur, or the consequences of which would be most severe. The aim is not to predict every possible threat, but using the best information available to us to identify the ones we should be most concerned about.

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2. What can help us identify risks?

Table 2 of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides guidance on the sources and approaches for identifying risks. The sources of information, where possible, should be the most recent version available for review.

Simply put, start by asking questions such as: What could happen? How could it happen? Why might it happen? When could it happen? There are also various sources of information that can assist us. These include data and trends [e.g. audit findings, incident data, complaints analysis, and performance trends], national and international surveillance systems and strategic risk surveys, the Government's National Risk Assessment, statistical modelling, other assessments of the internal and external factors influencing healthcare. Very often it may be someone's experience and knowledge that can assist in identifying risks.

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D. Understanding Risks

1. How do I understand risk?

Section **3.12 Procedure: Tools for Understanding Risk – Bow-tie Analysis** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states ‘A Bow-tie analysis is a method of analysing, mapping and understanding risks. It assists in clarifying the components of a risk, which is the risk event, the cause(s) of the risk event and the potential impacts [consequences] of the risk event if it were to materialise.

The Bow-tie represents the fact that a range of factors (causes) can converge to create the risk event and then once the Event has occurred that its consequences can be very far reaching. By understanding the cause(s) of a risk event, particularly the root cause(s) we can identify the best strategy to prevent or reduce the risk. There will always be some consequence of a risk event if it were to occur. Managing risk requires us consider how we respond to these consequences. The response could include managing the immediate disruption arising from the risk event and/or understanding what caused the risk event to occur and taking corrective action to reduce the likelihood or impact of it happening again.’

Simply put, describing a risk is one of the most important steps to take when trying to understand a risk. Unless we understand the threat, we cannot effectively manage it. A risk therefore is not something vague but can be described in precise and measureable terms.

2. What can help me to describe a risk?

Section **3.2 Procedure: Risk Description** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states that ‘An accurate and specific risk description will assist you in identifying what needs to be in place to manage the risk whereas a vague or poorly defined risk will leave you grappling at the next step in the process. The risk description is a structured statement of risk usually containing three elements: risk event, cause and impact.’ The procedure document sets out the steps to follow in arriving at a good risk description.

Simply put, when defining a risk, it is helpful to break it down into its essential components. These are the Risk Event, the Cause of the Risk and the Consequence or Impact of the Risk.

Risk Event: Risks should be described in terms of a ‘risk event’. How will we know when it has occurred, how would we experience it? For example, the theoretical risk of a pandemic became a reality with the arrival of COVID-19, a theoretical cyber threat became a reality with the cyber-attack on the HSE’s systems in 2021 and a theoretical threat of a fire disrupting a critical service became a reality in Wexford Hospital in March 2023.

Cause: Whereas the risk event defines the scope of our response, identifying the potential causes of the risk determines our response plan. The obvious cause isn’t always the root cause, the one which starts the domino effect leading to the Risk Event.

Impact [consequence]: Identifying the potential impact of the risk event can inform what actions need to be in place to ensure that if the event occurred, the negative impact is minimised or in the event that it can’t be minimised, that we have the most effective response

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in place.

3. Why is it important to understand the likelihood and impact of a risk?

Section **3.3.1 Rating a Risk** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'risk is measured in terms of two dimensions, likelihood and impact i.e., the likelihood (probability/ frequency) of the risk occurring and the impact (consequence) of the risk should it occur. In rating the risk it is important to understand both the impact of a risk event and the likelihood of the risk event occurring. This will inform the approach you take to controlling the risk. It may be possible to reduce one or both the likelihood and impact of a risk event.'

Simply put, understanding the likelihood of a risk occurring and its impact if it does, is essential to determining what our response to a risk will be. There are some risks for which it will be possible to reduce both its likelihood and impact. For others it may only be possible to mitigate the likelihood of it happening or the impact if it does. For example, we may be able to reduce the likelihood of fires or floods shutting down critical infrastructure as well as the impact if these events do occur. Whereas we may not be able to reduce the likelihood of a pandemic occurring, but we can reduce its impact on the health service if it does.

4. What do we mean by risk velocity?

Section **3.4.1 Risk Velocity** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'Risk velocity refers to how fast a risk may affect an organisation. Certain risks will have an immediate risk velocity such as an IT system outage following a significant security failure. Others may have a slower velocity.'

Simply put, risk velocity refers to how quickly we expect the risk to materialise and what is our response time likely to be if it does.

E. Risk Analysis

1. What is Inherent Risk?

Section **1.4 Key Definitions** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 defines inherent risk as 'Inherent risk in the HSE is the level of risk before consideration of control and/or action measures.'

Simply put, inherent risk is the amount of risk **before** the consideration of any controls. This is the initial or preliminary risk rating determined as part of the first risk assessment.

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2. What is Residual Risk?

Section **1.4 Key Definitions** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 defines residual risk as 'Residual risk in the HSE is the level of risk remaining after consideration of existing controls.'

Simply put, residual risk is the amount of risk remaining **after** consideration of controls. The residual risk rating changes frequently as completed actions may become controls and further reduce the risk rating. Actions which are not fully implemented have no impact on the residual risk rating.

3. What is a control and why are controls important?

Section **1.4 Key Definitions** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 defines control as 'Controls are measures that maintain and/or modify risk. In the HSE, a control is a measure that is in place, is working effectively and operating to reduce either the likelihood or impact of a risk. Controls include but are not limited to, any process, policy, device, practice, or other conditions and/or actions that are in place and maintain and/or modify risk.'

Simply put, controls are measures we put in place to prevent or reduce the likelihood of the risk event occurring and its impact if it does occur. In some instances however, it may only be possible to control either the likelihood of it happening or the impact if it does. In the example of COVID-19, there is very little we can do as a health service to reduce the likelihood of another pandemic. We can however reduce the impact if it does.

4. What is an effective control and why is it important?

Section **3.3.8 Effectiveness of Controls** from the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides guidance on control effectiveness. It states 'Controls can be broadly grouped into four types. Two types of control, Preventative and Directive are put in place before the risk materialises and would be considered proactive controls. The further two types are Detective and Corrective (which are closely linked) and focus on what happens after the risk occurs or which identify weaknesses in our current controls, these are reactive controls. In general, proactive controls would be seen as more effective than reactive controls.'

Simply put, in the HSE a control is a measure that is in place, is working effectively and operating to reduce either the likelihood or impact of a risk. A control must be verifiable [evidence of it working]. Controls are important because when they are designed and operating effectively they reduce the likelihood and/or consequence of a risk event occurring.

5. What types of controls are there?

Section **3.3.8 Effectiveness of Controls** from the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides examples of each control type.

'Proactive Controls

Preventative controls act to address the root cause of a risk and thus prevent the risk event

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from occurring in the first place. These can be, for example, automated processes, formal written approval processes, dual authorisation for certain high risk activities, the use of personal protective equipment, physical security, segregation of duties and computer passwords.

Preventative controls would be regarded as the strongest form of controls.

Directive controls give direction. These can be, for example, statutory obligations, regulatory standards including professional standards, or other organisational requirements or instructions, many of which are converted into policies, procedures, circulars, standard operating procedures and training. Directive controls can however, be weak controls, as while they state the practice to be followed, of themselves, they do not prevent poor practice from occurring.

Reactive Controls

Detective controls aim to identify a breach after the event. Examples include internal audits, clinical audits, and regulatory reports, incident reviews, monitoring information from reporting systems including incident reporting, performance reports, financial reporting, financial reviews, and complaints data. Detective controls can identify important corrective actions that need to be taken.

Corrective controls are put in place after a breach, system failure or weakness, or other gap is identified. Once these new controls are put in place, they can become a directive or preventative controls.'

Simply put, there are two categories of controls, proactive and reactive. Proactive control provide **direction** in the form of policies and training for example. **Preventative** controls are strong controls as they prevent the risk event occurring in the first place, for example the use of passwords to protect against unauthorised access to ICT systems. Reactive controls happen after the risk event has occurred. They **detect** if the event occurred e.g. fire alarms in building and **corrective** controls are actions to correct the event if it occurs e.g. sprinkler system to put out a fire. The four control types are Preventative, Directive, Detective and Corrective.

6. How do I rate a risk?

Section **3.3 Procedure: Risk Analysis (including Risk Rating)** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides detailed guidance on how to rate a risk. It states 'The process for rating risk is:

- 1) Using the Likelihood Table, see Appendix 2, identify and assign the likelihood score of the risk occurring on a scale of 1 to 5; and
- 2) Using the Risk Impact Table, see Appendix 2, identify the primary impact category and assign the impact score of the risk on a scale of 1 to 5; and
- 3) Multiply the two scores, to get the risk score.

Risk Score = Likelihood score x Impact score

- 4) Then using the HSE Risk Rating Matrix, see Appendix 2, align the score to a risk rating of High, Medium or Low.

The HSE has adopted a standardised approach to the assignment of likelihood and impact scores for the rating of the risk.

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The Risk Assessment Tool, in **Appendix 2**, includes the Risk Impact Table, Likelihood Table, Risk Scoring Matrix, and Risk Rating Matrix. This tool should be applied uniformly to all processes where a risk assessment is required to be rated.'

Simply put, risk is measured in terms of two dimensions, likelihood and impact i.e. the likelihood (probability) of the risk occurring and the impact (consequence) of the risk event should it occur.

1. Assess the likelihood of the risk event occurring having assessed the impact. Pick the best fit on the 1-5 scale from the Likelihood Table.
2. Assess the impact refer to the HSE Risk Assessment Tool [Appendix X] and identify the worst, realistic, primary impact category should the risk event occur. Pick the best fit on the 1-5 scale. It is not necessary to address each category.

Likelihood x Impact = Risk Score. Each risk scores is associated with either High, Medium or Low rating depending on the score. Refer to the risk rating matrix in the HSE Risk Assessment Tool for more information.

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F. Risk Evaluation

1. What do I do after I've assessed the Inherent and Residual risk rating?

Section **3.4 Procedure: Risk Evaluation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides detailed guidance in relation to risk evaluation. It states 'The purpose of risk evaluation is to make decisions based on the residual risk rating to determine whether the risk requires further management action.'

A risk assessed as being High is likely that you as Risk Owner will need to ensure that actions required to reduce the risk are identified and implemented. Risk evaluation allows you to look at the totality of risks assessed and to prioritise these in terms of which risks require the most urgent action or treatment.

Upon assessing the risks you may decide to place greater management focus on risks rated as high and less focus on risks which have a lower rating. Such decision-making should not be guided solely by the rating of the risk but rather the rating of a risk should inform decision-making.'

Simply put, decide whether the risk rating is **acceptable or unacceptable**. If acceptable, there is a requirement to monitor the risk going forward. If the risk rating is unacceptable, the risk is treated/reduced, transferred or avoided. The majority of risks in the HSE will require treatment, meaning a plan must be put in place to reduce the likelihood and/or impact of the risk event occurring.

2. What is an acceptable level of risk?

Section 3.4 Procedure: Risk Evaluation of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides detailed guidance in relation to risk evaluation. It states 'When evaluating a risk: If the residual risk rating is not acceptable or tolerable or if the desired target risk rating is different from the residual risk then the risk should be treated as set out in the procedure for Risk Treatment.'

A risk could be acceptable in the following circumstances:

- No treatment is available.
- Treatment costs are prohibitive (particularly relevant with Low rated risks)
- The level of risk is Low and does not warrant using resources to treat.
- The opportunities involved significantly outweigh the threats'

Simply put, at national or Senior Management level, risks to the strategic objectives of the organisation are considered against the HSE's Risk Appetite Statement to determine what level of risk is acceptable. At a regional, service, or individual unit level, the risks to the objectives or goals would be assessed against the desired target risk rating. If you are unsure please discuss with your line manager in the first instance.

3. What is target risk rating?

Section **1.4 Key Definitions** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 defines target risk as 'Target risk in the HSE is the planned level of risk after consideration of both control and action measures.'

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Simply put, the target risk rating is risk remaining following the finalisation of all actions on the plan to reduce the risk.

4. What do you mean by treat, transfer or avoid?

Section **2.2.3 Risk Evaluation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides guidance on risk evaluation. It states, 'The purpose of risk evaluation is to make decisions based on the risk analysis stage of the risk process, about which risks need treatment and the treatment priorities. The process considers whether or not a risk is within the desired level of risk. Where it is determined that the level of risk posed is not acceptable, the risk must be treated.

Risk evaluation leads to the determination of the most suitable method to manage the risk, such as;

- **Avoid/Terminate** it completely e.g. do not proceed with the planned activity.
- **Accept** the level of risk based on existing information e.g. pursue the opportunity.
- **Transfer the risk** e.g. to an identified individual or unit, that has been communicated to and notified, where many of the actions identified as required to mitigate are better managed and are within their span of control.
- **Reduce** the risk with further controls and/or actions.'

Simply put,

1. To **treat** risk means to put a plan in place to reduce the likelihood and/or impact of the risk event occurring.
2. To **transfer** risk in the HSE usually means to escalate it to next level of management. [See Communication and Consultation for more information on risk escalation]
3. To **avoid** risk, simply means to stop the risky activity altogether.

5. What is the HSE Risk Assessment Tool and where do I use it?

The HSE Risk Assessment Tool is provided in **Appendix 2** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023.

Simply put, the HSE Risk Assessment Tool is a standardised approach to the assignment of likelihood and impact scores and the rating of risk. This tool should be applied uniformly to all processes where risk assessment is required.

G. Responding to Risk

1. How do we manage risks?

Section **3.3.8 Effectiveness of Controls** from the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides examples of each control type.

'Proactive Controls

Preventative controls act to address the root cause of a risk and thus prevent the risk event from occurring in the first place. These can be, for example, automated processes, formal written approval processes, dual authorisation for certain high risk activities, the use of personal protective equipment, physical security, segregation of duties and computer passwords.

Preventative controls would be regarded as the strongest form of controls.

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Directive controls give direction. These can be, for example, statutory obligations, regulatory standards including professional standards, or other organisational requirements or instructions, many of which are converted into policies, procedures, circulars, standard operating procedures and training. Directive controls can however, be weak controls, as while they state the practice to be followed, of themselves, they do not prevent poor practice from occurring.

Reactive Controls

Detective controls aim to identify a breach after the event. Examples include internal audits, clinical audits, and regulatory reports, incident reviews, monitoring information from reporting systems including incident reporting, performance reports, financial reporting, financial reviews, and complaints data. Detective controls can identify important corrective actions that need to be taken.

Corrective controls are put in place after a breach, system failure or weakness, or other gap is identified. Once these new controls are put in place, they can become a directive or preventative controls.'

Simply put, having clarity on the Risk Event, its Cause(s) and Impact, we then need to put in place measures, which is Controls, aimed at either eliminating the threat, or reducing it.

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2. What are examples of risk ‘controls’?

Section **3.3.8 Effectiveness of Controls** from the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides guidance on control effectiveness. It states ‘Controls can be broadly grouped into four types. Two types of control, Preventative and Directive are put in place before the risk materialises and would be considered proactive controls. The further two types are Detective and Corrective (which are closely linked) and focus on what happens after the risk occurs or which identify weaknesses in our current controls, these are reactive controls. In general, proactive controls would be seen as more effective than reactive controls.’

Simply put, in the HSE a control is a measure that is in place, is working effectively and operating to reduce either the likelihood or impact of a risk. A control must be verifiable [evidence of it working]. Controls are important because when they are designed and operating effectively they reduce the likelihood and/or consequence of a risk event occurring. Controls generally fall into two categories, proactive controls and reactive controls. **Proactive controls: Directive controls** are intended to provide direction, instruction etc. They include policies, procedures etc. [While important and provide direction, unless they are complied with they don’t mitigate risk] **Preventative controls** are designed to prevent or significantly reduce the likelihood of the event occurring and are therefore typically stronger than other types of control.

Reactive controls: Detective controls are designed to detect weaknesses or breaches after the fact, for example audits, reviews etc. **Corrective controls** or actions are aimed at fixing a weaknesses or breach detected, including in controls.

3. What are some of the essential conditions of ‘controls’?

Section **1.4 Key Definitions** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 defines control as ‘Controls are measures that maintain and/or modify risk. In the HSE, a control is a measure that is in place, is working effectively and operating to reduce either the likelihood or impact of a risk. Controls include but are not limited to, any process, policy, device, practice, or other conditions and/or actions that are in place and maintain and/or modify risk.’

Simply put, the essential conditions of a control are that they **must: be in place, designed appropriately; working effectively and have a direct influence on reducing the likelihood and/or impact of the risk.**

4. Who is responsible for managing risk?

Section **1.5 Roles and Responsibilities** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 sets out the roles and responsibility in relation to risk management in the HSE, from the HSE Board to individual staff members. It states ‘Whereas every staff member is responsible for identifying and managing risk within the context of their work, there are certain common roles and responsibilities within every level of the health service for communication, notification, and escalation of identified risks, controls, and actions.’

Simply put, responsibility for identifying and managing risk lies at the level the risk is expected to occur. There may be occasions where responsibility for managing the risk transfers to a higher

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level of management. Any transfer of responsibility for risk is however subject to a formal decision and acceptance of responsibility by the person to whom it transfers.

H. Measuring Risk

1. Why do we measure risk?

Section **3.3.1 Rating a Risk** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'risk is measured in terms of two dimensions, likelihood and impact i.e., the likelihood (probability/ frequency) of the risk occurring and the impact (consequence) of the risk should it occur. In rating the risk it is important to understand both the impact of a risk event and the likelihood of the risk event occurring. This will inform the approach you take to controlling the risk. It may be possible to reduce one or both the likelihood and impact of a risk event.'

Simply put, measuring the level of risk helps to understand how serious the risk is. This means we can focus our efforts on managing the most serious risks.

2. Does this mean I don't have to worry about the less serious risks?

Section **3.4 Procedure: Risk Evaluation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides detailed guidance in relation to risk evaluation.

It states 'When evaluating a risk: If the residual risk rating is not acceptable or tolerable or if the desired target risk rating is different from the residual risk then the risk should be treated as set out in the procedure for Risk Treatment.

A risk could be acceptable in the following circumstances:

- No treatment is available.
- Treatment costs are prohibitive (particularly relevant with Low rated risks)
- The level of risk is Low and does not warrant using resources to treat.
- The opportunities involved significantly outweigh the threats'

Simply put, while it may not be necessary to focus our efforts on the less serious risks, we may need to monitor them as a risk may change quickly and our ability to respond quickly to that change may be critical.

3. What are we measuring?

Section **3.3.1 Rating a Risk** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'risk is measured in terms of two dimensions, likelihood and impact i.e., the likelihood (probability/ frequency) of the risk occurring and the impact (consequence) of the risk should it occur. In rating the risk it is important to understand both the impact of a risk event and the likelihood of the risk event occurring. This will inform the approach you take to controlling the risk. It may be possible to reduce one or both the likelihood and impact of a risk event.'

Simply put, when measuring risk we look at two things: the likelihood or probability of it

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materialising and its potential impact if it does.

Understanding the speed at which a threat could materialise, or our expected response time if it does, can also be an important consideration.

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4. How do we measure risk?

Section **3.3 Procedure: Risk Analysis (including Risk Rating)** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides detailed guidance on how to rate a risk. It states 'The process for rating risk is:

- 1) Using the Likelihood Table, see Appendix 2, identify and assign the likelihood score of the risk occurring on a scale of 1 to 5; and
- 2) Using the Risk Impact Table, see Appendix 2, identify the primary impact category and assign the impact score of the risk on a scale of 1 to 5; and
- 3) Multiply the two scores, to get the risk score.

Risk Score = Likelihood score x Impact score

- 4) Then using the HSE Risk Rating Matrix, see Appendix 2, align the score to a risk rating of High, Medium or Low.'

The HSE has adopted a standardised approach to the assignment of likelihood and impact scores for the rating of the risk. **The Risk Assessment Tool, in Appendix 2**, includes the Risk Impact Table, Likelihood Table, Risk Scoring Matrix, and Risk Rating Matrix. This tool should be applied uniformly to all processes where a risk assessment is required to be rated.

Simply put, a scoring system is used to measure the level of risk. Both the likelihood and impact of the risk are scored on a scale of 1 to 5, multiplied, and then mapped on to a 5x5 matrix. This means the lowest possible score is 1 [low risk] and the highest is 25 [High risk]. Obviously the higher the score is, the more we need to be concerned.

Using this scoring system can help us to measure the threat level before we do anything about it [inherent risk], the level after we put effective controls in place [residual risk] and how far we want to reduce the level of risk through the controls we put in place [target risk].

5. Is the measurement of risk subjective?

Section **2.2 Risk Management Process** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides guidance on risk assessment. It states 'The assessment of likelihood and impact is in some cases subjective but should be assessed by relevant managers and subject matter experts to reduce the level of subjectivity. Preferably, where it is available, independent data to support your assessment should be used. This can include performance data, incident data, internal and external audit reports, inspections, surveys and a range of other available internal and external information.'

Simply put, the scoring of risks should be informed by objective data. This may be performance, incident, financial or other forms of data.

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I. Essential Risk Information

1. What is the essential information I should have in relation to a risk?

Section **3.2 Procedure: Risk Description** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures states that ‘An accurate and specific risk description will assist you in identifying what needs to be in place to manage the risk whereas a vague or poorly defined risk will leave you grappling at the next step in the process. The risk description is a structured statement of risk usually containing three elements: risk event, cause and impact.’

The procedure document sets out the steps to follow in arriving at a good risk description.

Simply put, the minimum information we should have in relation to a risk is the objective the risk relates to; a precise description of the risk [Event, Cause, Impact], what we are trying to control [Likelihood and/ or Impact], how serious the risk is [risk rating of High, Medium or Low], the measures we have in place to manage the risk [Controls].

2. What is a risk register’?

Section **3.6 Procedure: Recording and Reporting** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states ‘Managers rely on a standard suite of reports to provide critical insights into how their area of responsibility is performing and which inform the decisions they have to make [e.g. Performance Reports, Financial Reports etc].’

Simply put, in the same way, we also rely on a report - the Risk Register - that brings together in a summary form, all the essential information relating to the risks being managed. This includes a clear description of the risks, ranks those risks by how serious they are, the measures that are in place to control the risk, the additional controls required to further reduce the risk and the measurement of the current level of risk. A good Risk Register is therefore more than a list of the risks we face. It is an essential repository and resource that summarises the critical information we need to understand and manage the risks we face and serves as a means of reporting on our ‘performance’ in reducing those risks.

J. Risk Recording and Reporting

1. Where do I record my risk?

Section **3.6 Procedure: Recording and Reporting** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states ‘Risk assessments should be documented on the Risk Assessment Form available at: Risk Management Support Tools – HSE.ie. At this point you will have completed the risk assessment and have all the information required to enter it onto the risk register. Risks assessed and managed at an individual ward/unit or single residential unit or committee are to be maintained for reference by staff using that place of work. The manager should then determine which of these assessed risks need to be recorded on the risk register at Service or Corporate level.’

Simply put, a risk assessment form is available for recording individual risk assessments. Completed risk assessments are recorded in a risk register.

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2. How do I complete my risk register?

Section 3.6.2 What is the Process for Entering the Risk Assessment onto the Risk Register?

The HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides detailed guidance and states that 'Training on how to complete the HSE Excel Risk Register Tool is available on HSELand via the following link: <http://bit.ly/2N4bpPE>. Where the electronic risk register has been made available to your area, this must be used over the excel risk register.'

Simply put, training on how to complete the HSE Excel Risk Register Tool is available on HSELand via the following link: <http://bit.ly/2N4bpPE>. On sign in to HSELand, the module can be accessed through the new **Risk Management** folder in the **Quality, Leadership & Management** section.

3. Who reviews the risk register and how often?

Section 3.8 Procedure: **Monitoring and Review** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'Though risk is monitored (on an ongoing basis as outlined above at relevant Management Team meetings), the Management Team should consider the entirety of the register periodically, ideally at a dedicated risk management meeting. Such a review process can assist in keeping the register relevant and allow for the identification of new risks and the archiving of risks that have been managed. It is recommended that the risk register should be reviewed in its entirety at a minimum on a quarterly basis.'

Simply put, risk is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Risk Owner, Risk Lead and local manager. Risk Management should be an agenda item at all management and committee meetings. It is recommended that the risk register should be reviewed in its entirety by the management team at least on a quarterly basis.

4. What does a good risk register look like?

Section 3.6 Procedure: **Recording and Reporting** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'Managers rely on a standard suite of reports to provide critical insights into how their area of responsibility is performing and which inform the decisions they have to make [e.g. Performance Reports, Financial Reports etc].

Simply put, managers rely on a standard suite of reports to provide critical insights into how their area of responsibility is performing and which inform the decisions they have to make.

In the same way, they also rely on a risk register that brings together in a summary form, all the essential information relating to all of the risks being managed. This includes, a **clear description of the risk**, the **measures that are in place to control** the risk, the **additional actions required** to further reduce the risk and the measurement of the level of threat.

5. How many risks should be on my risk register?

Section 3.6 Procedure: **Recording and Reporting** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 states 'Managers rely on a standard suite of reports to provide critical insights into how their area of responsibility is performing and which inform the decisions they have to make [e.g. Performance Reports, Financial Reports etc].

Simply put, think quality over quantity. It should be a manageable amount of between 5 and

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20 risks. It should contain key significant risks as opposed to ongoing issues.

6. Who is responsible for the Risk Register and identification of risks?

Section **3.1 Procedure: Risk Identification** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 provides guidance on risk identification. It states 'there can be several approaches to identifying the risk, areas of impact, events, their causes, and potential impact. You should also aim to identify the results associated with not pursuing an opportunity, that is, the risk of doing nothing and missing an opportunity. The HSE uses a combination of top-down and bottom-up risk assessments for this.'

Section **1.5 Roles and Responsibilities** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 sets out the roles and responsibility in relation to risk management in the HSE, from the HSE Board to individual staff members.

Simply put, the area Manager [Risk Owner] is the risk custodian tasked with the review of the risk register, he/she is not solely responsible for identification all risks. Identification, analysis and evaluation of key risks is the collective responsibility of all Managers within the HSE, to identify key risks events that may impact their area of responsibility. Each risk should be assigned to a Risk Owner who is responsible for ensuring that the risk is managed appropriately.

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7. I don't currently have a risk register, should I implement one?

Section **2.5 Communication and Consultation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures states 'A fundamental principle is that risk is managed at the level at which it is expected to materialises.'

Simply put, if you have identified a risk which is being managed locally, the risk assessment should be completed and recorded on a local risk register. It is important to note that risk registers are also relevant for Projects, Committees, and Oversight Groups etc. outside of the standard organisational structure.

8. What is the Corporate Risk Register?

Section **2.7.2 HSE's Corporate Risk Register** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures states 'The HSE's principal risks are recorded on the HSE's Corporate Risk Register (CRR). They are approved by the EMT and reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and other Board Committees who have responsibility for oversight of the HSE's principal risks. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Board review and approve the HSE's Corporate Risk Register for its annual sign off on the HSE's principal risks and uncertainties to form the basis of reporting in the HSE's Annual Report. All HSE corporate risks, recorded on the HSE's CRR, and associated action plans are reviewed by the EMT as part of either a monthly or quarterly review process depending on the nature of the risk. Each of the risks on the CRR is assigned to a member of the EMT as the owner of that risk. The Chair of the ARC allocates each of the risks to one of the committees of the Board to provide oversight for the management of risks and review these risks and associated action plans with the relevant members of the EMT.'

Simply put, the Corporate Risk Register refers to the Principal Risks and Uncertainties of the HSE, which are published annually in the Annual Report. Some Hospitals/Hospital Groups/other local organisations/functions also use the term Corporate Risk Register to refer to the Principal Risks and Uncertainties of that organisation/function.

K. Communicating Risk

1. Why is communication important in the risk management process?

Section **3.7 Procedure: Communication and Consultation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'effective communication and consultation enhance risk management. All parties need to understand each other's perspectives and, where appropriate, be actively involved in decision-making. There should be clear routes and processes for the communication, notification and escalation of risk from one level of the organisation to another. However, it is also important to realise that such activity does not absolve the responsibility of the Manager, to which the risk relates, of taking any actions required to mitigate it that are within their span of control. The risk, therefore, remains on their risk register.'

Simply put, communication and consultation is essential to the process of identifying, assessing and responding to a risk. It ensures that the best information is available to the person managing it. It also provides an opportunity to mobilise others who can assist us in our efforts.

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2. What responsibilities do Line Managers have?

Section **1.5 Roles and Responsibilities** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023 sets out the roles and responsibility in relation to risk management in the HSE, from the HSE Board to individual staff members.

Simply put, line managers have a particular responsibility to understand the risks within their area of responsibility and to ensure they are being effectively managed.

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3. Are there more formal mechanisms for risk communication?

Section **3.7 Procedure: Communication and Consultation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, provided detailed guidance on the formal mechanisms for risk communication and states ‘effective communication and consultation enhance risk management. All parties need to understand each other’s perspectives and, where appropriate, be actively involved in decision-making. There should be clear routes and processes for the communication, notification and escalation of risk from one level of the organisation to another. However, it is also important to realise that such activity does not absolve the responsibility of the Manager, to which the risk relates, of taking any actions required to mitigate it that are within their span of control. The risk, therefore, remains on their risk register.’

Simply put, communication of risk may also serve a more formal purpose.

Notification to the next level of management that a new and serious risk has emerged or that an existing risk has become more serious.

Escalation where responsibility for managing the risk is accepted by the next level of management. This may be due to the nature of the risk, that the risk is more systemic or because the measures required to modify the risk are not within the control of the original owner of the risk. Communicating risk must always have a clear objective and outcome.

4. What is risk communication?

Section **3.7.1 Risk Communication** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states ‘Management Teams across the HSE regularly discuss risks at the level of the organisation for which they are responsible for. These discussions and decisions are part of the normal management/ performance process. However, oftentimes those discussions are not framed using the language of risk or part of the formal risk management process and therefore opportunities to embed risk management into day-to-day management practice can be missed. One simple discipline that can be adopted is to add a standing agenda item to team or committee meetings to reflect on whether any of the discussions at the meeting constituted a risk, and/or actions to address those risks were identified or add “risk management/register” as a specific agenda item. Integrating risk management awareness into normal management practice will assist in making the risk management process and risk register a more useful and meaningful management tool. There should be ongoing communication of risks with a Risk Owner’s relevant Line Manager to ensure awareness and understanding of risks, and to obtain feedback and other relevant information to support decision-making. Due consideration should be given to the effectiveness of the controls in place to mitigate the risk and whether the nature of the risk is changing. This process can include a general communication, risk notification or may, in certain circumstances, result in a risk escalation.’

Simply put, there are three levels of communication, each of which increases the formality associated with the communication, these are **risk communication**, **notification** and **escalation**. Risk communication is the sharing or exchanging of information and gaining a common understanding relating to risk events.

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5. What is risk notification?

Section **3.7.2 Risk Notification** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'Risk notification is an exchange of information to support the decision-making process. A risk notification is not a formal escalation of risk.'

Simply put, risk notification is formally recognising the risk is increasing or is not being managed effectively, and it requires notification to the next level of management.

6. What is risk escalation and when do I escalate risk?

Section **3.7.3 Risk Escalation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'There may be occasions when the Line Manager may decide that the current Risk Owner cannot address the necessary actions as they are outside of the Risk Owner's control. For example, the risk may be more systemic or the most appropriate action owner is at a higher management level or there remains a concern about the existing level of risk, which requires additional stakeholders to contribute to ensure an appropriate set of actions are put in place to address the risk.'

In these circumstances, the Line Manager may decide following a review of the risk with the Risk Owner that the risk should be escalated to them, for management.

As the responsibility for the management of risk generally lies at the level it may manifest, escalation must be subject to a formal decision by the Line Manager which should be documented and communicated. Likewise, the decision of the Line Manager to de-escalate a risk should be documented and communicated. A de-escalation can occur if the Line Manager decides that the risk is within their direct report's control to manage.'

Simply put, risk escalation is required in certain circumstances. These could include when a risk can no longer be managed at the level in which it is expected to materialise.

7. How and when do I escalate a risk?

Section **3.7.3 Risk Escalation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'There may be occasions when the Line Manager may decide that the current Risk Owner cannot address the necessary actions as they are outside of the Risk Owner's control. For example, the risk may be more systemic or the most appropriate action owner is at a higher management level or there remains a concern about the existing level of risk, which requires additional stakeholders to contribute to ensure an appropriate set of actions are put in place to address the risk.'

In these circumstances, the Line Manager may decide following a review of the risk with the Risk Owner that the risk should be escalated to them, for management.

As the responsibility for the management of risk generally lies at the level it may manifest, escalation must be subject to a formal decision by the Line Manager which should be documented and communicated. Likewise, the decision of the Line Manager to de-escalate a risk should be documented and communicated. A de-escalation can occur if the Line Manager decides that the risk is within their direct report's control to manage.'

Simply put, a fundamental principle is that risk is managed at the level at which it is expected to materialise. Risk escalation is required in certain circumstances. Risks proposed for notification, escalation or inclusion on another risk register are subject to a formal request for consideration.

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A 'Proposed risk for consideration' form is available on the Risk Management Support Tools website page at: [Risk Management Support Tools - HSE.ie](#)

8. What will my line manager do when they receive the escalated risk for consideration?

Section **3.7.3 Risk Escalation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'The decision to accept or not accept a risk or action, or the escalation of a risk to another level of management and therefore recorded on their risk register must be formally agreed between the relevant Line Manager and current Risk Owner who is requesting an escalation of the risk. This decision should be recorded and formally communicated between the Line Manager and the Risk Owner. A decision to escalate should not be an end in itself but must be accompanied by an agreed set of actions/ responsibilities. Where a risk is subject to a formal decision agreed between the current Risk Owner and by the next level of management it should include the agreement of transfer of ownership for specific controls/actions also. Where a decision is taken not to accept an escalated risk other actions may be required. This could include providing additional supports or resources to manage the risk.

The outcome of such considerations must be communicated back to the service that notified the risk.

Simply put, when a risk is proposed for consideration to a more Senior Manager, that Manager may:

- Review the risk and decide not to accept it but seeks assurances in relation to the adequacy of its management within the referring service area. This can include the provision of resources/authorities to assist in its mitigation.
- Decide that the risk should be included on their risks register. Reasons for inclusion are generally due to one of two reasons:
 - That the significance of the risk is such that it requires oversight on their register, or
 - Though the risk was identified by the area of the service that notified it, that it has resonance across the service as a whole and rather than just manage it on each individual register that many of the actions identified as required are better managed collectively. For example, if an overarching policy or process is required. If there are multiple services that could be impacted by this risk, this may involve informing and/or consultation with other services that may be impacted by a similar risk on how to best mitigate this risk.

On accepting the notified risk, the Manager arranges for it to be assessed in the context of their area of responsibility and includes it on their risk register. Any additional actions that are identified as being required are assigned according to the business rules, that is:

- to themselves,
- to members of their Management Team or
- to their own Line Manager.

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9. How will I be notified if my request from 'Proposed risk for consideration' was accepted?

Section **3.7.3 Risk Escalation** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'The outcome will be communicated back to the service that proposed the risk for consideration.'

Simply put, the decision will be communicated back to the service that proposed the risk for consideration.

10. How and when do I de-escalate a risk?

Section **3.8.4 De-escalating Risk** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'In instances where a risk was notified to and accepted onto the register of a more Senior Manager for oversight, it may be that following the implementation of actions the rating of the risk has reduced to an acceptable level, or, remaining actions lie within the control of the manager at the level below. In such circumstances, a decision may be taken to **Close** the risk on the register and to de-escalate it onto the register of the manager on the level below. Such risks when added to the register below are given a risk status of **Open** on that register and are reviewed at the next Management Team meeting of that manager.'

Simply put, if a risk had been accepted onto a higher register and treatment has reduced the risk to an acceptable level, then a decision may be taken to 'close' the risk on the register and to de-escalate it onto the register of the Manager on the level below.

L. Monitoring and Review

1. How do I monitor risk in my area of responsibility?

Section **3.8.1 Reviewing the entirety of the Register** of the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023, states 'Though risk is monitored (on an ongoing basis as outlined above at relevant Management Team meetings), the Management Team should consider the entirety of the register periodically, ideally at a dedicated risk management meeting. Such a review process can assist in keeping the register relevant and allow for the identification of new risks and the archiving of risks that have been managed. It is recommended that the risk register should be reviewed in its entirety at a minimum on a quarterly basis.'

Simply put, line managers have a responsibility to understand the threats and opportunities within their area of responsibility and each area should have in place a process to review and report on risk regularly. Some communications may not use the word 'risk' but items may be discussed and topics covered where questions are asked such as 'what is the worst case scenario?' Given the diverse and dynamic nature of the healthcare environment, it is important to be alert to emerging risks as well as monitoring known risks.

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M. Risk Management Training

1. Where can I get further training?

Risk management training is currently available as an eLearning module on HSE LanD - Access HSE LanD: <http://bit.ly/2N4bpPE> On sign in to HSE LanD, the module can be accessed through the new **Risk Management** folder in the **Quality, Leadership & Management** section.

A copy of the Excel Risk Register Template is on the website:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/riskmanagement/risk-management-documentation/2017-risk-management-supporting-tools/>

The ERM team are currently in the process of developing an ERM Training Programme.

2. My question is not listed, where can I find further guidance?

Further support tools can be found at the following location: [Risk Management Support Tools - HSE.ie](#) or contact the ERM Programme at erm.queries@hse.ie