Workbook

Level 2
Health, Safety and Welfare in a Fitness Environment
Health, Safety and Welfare in a Fitness Environment

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Section 1: Health and safety requirements in a fitness environment

Learning outcomes

☐ To know the key health and safety legislation that applies to roles within the health and fitness sector.
☐ To know who is responsible for health and safety within a fitness environment.
☐ To know the documentation associated with health and safety.
☐ To understand what is meant by ‘duty of care’.
☐ To know the professional boundaries of the instructor’s role and relevant referral processes.
☐ To know how the REPs Code of Ethical Practice applies to the instructor’s role.

Health and safety legislation

Health and safety law in the UK is essentially covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act sets out the general duties of employers towards employees and members of the public and of employees to themselves and each other. The act necessitates employers to assess the risks within their organisations and take sensible measures to tackle these risks. The act is very relevant to health and fitness workplaces: essentially it helps to protect employees and customers from potential hazards in the environment.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (the Management Regulations) is a document which gives more explicit instruction as to how employers are required to manage health and safety within their organisations. These regulations, like the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, apply to every work activity.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 are the two main pieces of legislation covering health and safety in the fitness industry. There are, however, a number of further legislative regulations relating to health and safety which impact upon the way in which a fitness club can operate:

- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). This requires employers to officially report on certain occupational injuries, diseases and dangerous events.
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (PPE). This requires employers to provide appropriate protective clothing and equipment for their employees.
- Noise at Work Regulations 1989. This requires employers to take action to protect employees from hearing damage.
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. This requires anybody in control of electrical systems to ensure these systems are safe to use and maintained in a safe condition.
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH). This requires employers to assess the risks from hazardous substances and take appropriate precautions.
COSHH and RIDDOR are equally important pieces of legislation from the perspective of a health and fitness organisation as they shape the way in which certain daily tasks must be carried out by employees. COSHH, which sets out clear regulations for handling and dealing with hazardous substances and the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations (PPE) are relevant to many daily tasks within a fitness environment; for example, cleaning gym equipment and pool testing. RIDDOR is a highly important piece of regulation covering any illnesses, injuries or dangerous events that occur in the workplace. It is essential that any such incidents are reported immediately through the correct chain of command.

Responsibility for health and safety in a fitness environment

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, everyone who works within an organisation is ultimately responsible in some way for health and safety within that organisation. In a health and fitness club, for example, the general manager needs to ensure adherence to company policies, the fitness instructor must take responsibility for health and safety on the gym floor and the receptionist covers health and safety front of house. The general manager of a facility is responsible for ensuring that the basic health and safety guidelines are covered and that all members of staff are aware of the health and safety procedures of the organisation.

Health and safety law does, however, make some specific demands upon employers. They are legally bound to ensure adherence to a number of general rules. The employer must:

- make the workplace safe and eliminate or control risks to health
- ensure plant and machinery are safe and that safe systems of work are set and followed
- ensure articles and substances are moved, stored and used safely
- provide adequate welfare facilities
- give workers the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary for their health and safety, and
- consult workers on health and safety matters.

As has already been mentioned, health and safety is ultimately the responsibility of everyone in the workplace but certain situations dictate that only those who are competent and trained to act do so. From a legal viewpoint this reduces liability as only those who are qualified and trained to act are liable for certain situations. An unqualified doctor would not be expected to perform an operation and in the same way fitness professionals should not be undertaking tasks for which they are not qualified.
The need for specialist knowledge applies to two situations in particular.

**First aid**

In fitness environments, where people are exercising and moving around equipment, there is always the risk of injury. For this reason it is essential that a duty first aider or designated first aider is present at all times to administer any first aid that may be required. In no circumstances should someone who is not qualified administer first aid. Once first aid has been administered all details must be recorded in the accident book, no matter how small the incident or injury. Any equipment that has been used in the process should be re-stocked. This may involve informing the duty manager or lead first aider who is responsible for the ordering of any first aid equipment. Failure to re-stock any equipment used may result in a first aider being unable to administer effective first aid in future.

**Fire alarm testing and maintenance checks**

It is essential that fire alarm equipment is checked and tested regularly. It is the responsibility of the operations manager, the general manager or the designated fire or health and safety officer to perform these checks.

It is essential that any employees who are first aid or fire trained regularly refresh their training to ensure their knowledge and qualifications are up-to-date and that they are competent to react to an incident. Employees are as responsible as their employers for ensuring that their own qualifications and training are updated.

**Health and safety documents**

All fitness instructors should be made aware of a number of key documents upon induction to an organisation. Employee knowledge of these documents should be kept up-to-date. The essential three documents are as follows:

**Policy Statement**

This outlines a company’s intentions regarding health and safety. It is a statement of commitment by the senior management team to health and safety. If a company employs five or more people it is legally required to produce a written health and safety policy. A copy of this policy should be displayed in a place accessible to all employees such as a staff room.

**Risk assessments**

These assessments, which involve identifying potential hazards and evaluating the likelihood of these doing harm, are a legal requirement in a workplace. All employees should be made aware of the risks to which they, their colleagues, their clients and any other relevant person may be exposed in their place of work. Risk assessments should be constantly reviewed but are typically updated either annually or if an accident has occurred.

**Emergency procedures (standard operating procedures)**

These are plans which provide detailed instructions regarding actions to be taken in the event of an emergency, incident or accident in the workplace. It is important that employees strictly adhere to these plans. Fitness instructors must have a very clear understanding of what to do in the event of an emergency or incident and be able to act immediately and effectively. A failure to act according to instruction or an omission could result in legal proceedings being taken against an instructor (in the form of a civil law suit).
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In addition to the essential items described there are a number of other important documents pertaining to health and safety at work:

**Accident book**

This is where to record the details of any accident or incident which occurs in the workplace. All details recorded in this book must be legible and accurate as the information may be used by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) should they have to investigate an incident or accident that has taken place in the workplace under RIDDOR.

**Service / maintenance book**

This is used to keep a record of services performed on equipment within the fitness environment. Details of any services must be recorded and held for at least two years as this permits the production of an audit trail should an accident occur. Accidents have and will occur due to poorly serviced equipment.

**First aid log**

A log is often kept alongside the first aid kit in order that any first aider who has administered first aid and used a piece of equipment may record the details. Details recorded in the first aid log must always be transferred to the accident book which is the essential document under RIDDOR.

**Cleaning log**

This records all general cleaning that has taken place during the course of the working day. This log should detail who has carried out each task and what, if any, substances have been used to perform the task; for example, hydrochloric acid for pool maintenance. This document is covered by COSHH.

**Fire alarm testing and maintenance log**

It is vital that fire equipment and alarms are regularly tested and maintained to ensure they are working correctly. Most fitness venues and clubs follow strict testing procedures and hold at least one scheduled test on a weekly basis. It is essential that the days and timings of these scheduled tests are known by everyone who works in and attends the facility as this should negate confusion and possibly panic. Fitness instructors are often tasked with informing members that an alarm is about to be activated.

As well as the logs and books described, fitness instructors will need to deal with a number of other documents including PAR-Q forms, informed consent forms and doctor’s consent forms. All of these documents contain personal details. This information is of a sensitive nature and should be treated accordingly to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). This is an act of parliament that defines UK law on the processing of data on identifiable living people. It was designed to protect people’s fundamental rights and freedoms and in particular their right to privacy with respect to the processing of personal data. In practice it means individuals can control the information which is held about them. Most of the act does not apply to domestic use such as the keeping of a personal address book but anyone who holds personal data for any other (business) purpose is legally obliged to comply with this act.
Duty of care

Under UK law all employers have a ‘duty of care’ to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst they are at work. This means they must assess and identify any risks arising from hazards at work. It is important to note, however, that under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employees also have a duty of care and their acts or omissions (failure to do something; for example, report an accident) could lead to them being held accountable.

All fitness organisations, be they a leisure centre, a health spa or a fitness club, are used by a wide variety of individuals. Some attendees will be part of what are termed ‘special populations’; for example, older adults, young people and children and disabled people.

Some members of these special populations may find it difficult to deal with the environment and potential hazards of a fitness facility; for example, they may experience problems when trying to move between resistance machines or through a free-weights area. Certain members from special populations are considered ‘vulnerable’ as they are less able to look after their own interests and may be at higher risk than the ‘average’ member of being abused (mentally and physically) or excluded (unable to utilise all the facilities of the venue or club). Duty of care dictates that vulnerable members should be afforded the same opportunities as other members and should not be taken advantage of or excluded in any way.

Certain provisions may need to be taken to ensure that the duty of care is upheld for vulnerable members. It may be necessary, for example, to provide a chaperone for a club user with a disability or to allow a parent or guardian to take responsibility for a child or young adult. The organisation should provide its employees with clear guidance as to the reasonable steps which need to be taken to minimise the hazards from activities, substances or situations pertaining to vulnerable members.

Professional boundaries

All professions need to ensure that their employees understand and observe their professional boundaries. The fitness industry offers clear guidance concerning the role of fitness instructors and what they may or may not do whilst working in a fitness environment. The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) operates a code of ethics for the fitness industry. This code of ethics covers four main areas:

Rights

Fitness professionals should promote and respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being.

Relationships

Fitness professionals should develop relationships with their customers based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect.

Professional standards

Fitness professionals should demonstrate proper personal conduct and behaviour at all times and be fair honest and considerate to all participants.

Personal responsibilities

Fitness professionals should retain a high level of competence through qualifications, and make an ongoing commitment to training that ensures safe and correct practice.

The code of ethics provides clear guidelines regarding the professional boundaries of a fitness instructor and indeed covers all people working within the fitness industry. Any fitness sector employee should glean from the code what tasks are acceptable and appropriate for them to perform. The code of ethics is particularly relevant to fitness instructors dealing with special populations. Everyday tasks that fall within the professional boundaries of a fitness instructor dealing with special populations include:

- providing a thorough gym induction
- writing a programme
- helping with the operation of a machine (resistance or CV)
- advising on certain areas of fitness such as training and goals
- making suggestions for other exercise such as classes and so forth, and
- demonstrating correct technique and giving teaching points.
On the other hand, fitness instructors dealing with special populations should avoid:

- socialising with those concerned outside the workplace
- placing themselves in situations where they are alone with those concerned
- counselling or discussing problems, especially those of a fragile or sexual nature, with those concerned, and
- using physical correction to improve the technique of those concerned.

Any instructor who becomes aware that a colleague is acting outside of his or her professional boundaries has a legal and moral duty of care to inform someone who can take immediate action to rectify any wrong doing.

Summary

You should now know the key health and safety legislation that applies to roles within the health and fitness sector:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management Health and Safety Regulations 1999
- RIDDOR 1995
- PPE at Work 1992
- COSHH 2002

You should now know who is responsible for health and safety within a fitness environment:

- All employees
- Employers and managers (representing the company)
- Special officers such as a first aider or a fire marshal

You should now know the documentation associated with health and safety:

- Policy statement
- Risk assessment
- Emergency procedures (standard operating procedures)
- Accident book
- First aid book
- Cleaning logs
- Fire alarm testing and maintenance records

You should now understand what is meant by ‘duty of care’ especially when working with the following groups:

- Older adults
- Young people
- Disabled people

You should now know the professional boundaries of your role and relevant referral processes

You should now know how the REPs code of ethics applies to your role:

- Rights
- Relationships
- Professional standards
- Personal responsibilities
Section 2: How to control risks in a fitness environment

Learning outcomes
☐ To know what a risk assessment is.
☐ To know how to conduct risk assessments.
☐ To know how to control risks within a fitness environment.

Risk assessments
Under the provisions of The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 all employees are legally bound to carry out detailed risk assessments of the workplace. In the case of a fitness instructor the workplace could be the gym floor, the studio or the reception area.

A risk assessment is a careful examination of anything in the workplace that could cause a ‘person’ to suffer injury or ill health. The person could be the person undertaking the risk assessment, one of his or her colleagues or a member of or a visitor to the facility. In order to perform a risk assessment it is necessary to be able to define a risk, estimate it, evaluate it and more importantly, take any necessary action to prevent it.

There are a number of basic terms which apply when assessing a risk:

A hazard
This is anything that may have the potential to cause harm. It could be something as specialised as a piece of equipment on the gym floor or as commonplace as a cup of coffee on the desk at the reception.

A hazardous event
This is when someone or something interacts with the hazard and allows it to cause harm; for example, a weight on the gym floor (the hazard) is causing no problem until someone trips over it (the hazardous event) at which stage it becomes harmful.

Likelihood
This is a measure of the chance that the hazardous event will occur. Returning to the example above, it is more likely that someone will trip over the weight on the gym floor during a busy period than when the gym is empty.

Consequence
This is the outcome of the hazardous event occurring. If, in the example used, someone tripped over the weight the consequence might be a sprained ankle or a bump to the head.

To evaluate a risk during a risk assessment both the likelihood of a hazardous event occurring and the potential consequences of the hazardous event must be considered:

\[ \text{risk} = \text{likelihood} \times \text{consequence} \]

Risk assessments are about deciding who might be harmed, how serious the consequences could be and the likelihood of something actually going wrong. Once the risks have been identified and their significance estimated, attention can be diverted towards eliminating or at least controlling them.

There are two main types of risk assessments:

Generic risk assessments
These are detailed, careful inspections of the workplace.

Dynamic risk assessments
Most people carry out dynamic risk assessments on a daily basis without even realising; for example, before crossing a road a person will carry out a dynamic risk assessment to identify if there are any hazards such as cars coming from either direction. Dynamic risk assessments are spontaneous and natural.
Conducting a risk assessment

A generic risk assessment could become a legal document in the event of an accident or incident. For this reason it is essential that it is completed correctly and legibly. Not all risk assessments are completed in exactly the same way as different organisations will have different policies and documents. As a general guide, however, the following information is likely to be required:

- **The establishment name**: for example, Average Joe’s Gym.
- **The date of assessment**: When the risk assessment was carried out (risks are usually re-assessed annually).
- **The name of the assessor**: Who carried out the assessment.
- **The activity to be performed**: If the risk assessment pertains to fitness activities it is essential to show that sessions are planned and that instructors have good understanding of the elements within their sessions.
- **The participants’ ability**: Again if the risk assessment relates to fitness activities, it should show that the instructor has considered those who will be participating (in large group activities the participants are likely to have mixed abilities and this could bring about added risks which must be considered).
- **The environment in which the activity is to be conducted**: The risk assessment should show that consideration has been given to any hazards in the area being assessed. Thought should be given to the amount of space available and the expected number of participants.
- **The suitability of the location for exercise**: If the risk assessment concerns a fitness activity it should identify whether the activity is to be conducted in a suitable location with sufficient levels of lighting and ventilation.
- **The equipment to be used**: The risk assessment should show that any equipment chosen for a fitness activity is suitable and serviceable (accidents occur when equipment has not been checked before use).
- **Who is at risk?**: If the risk assessment concerns a fitness activity it should identify anybody who is potentially at risk from taking part in the activity. It should also consider anyone not participating who may be in the area.

- **The proximity to key locations, equipment and personnel**: The risk assessment should identify the nearest fire exits and first aid kit to the location being assessed. The assessment should also outline how to contact the duty first aider, the location of the accident book and the nearest telephone.

If, when completing the risk assessment, fitness professionals become aware of a risk which they are not competent to address, it is essential that they consult their line manager or the health and safety representative for further advice.
How to control or reduce risks in a fitness environment

Once a risk assessment has been conducted it is important to know how to deal with any identified risks. Risk is an ever-present part of daily life, both at work and at home and is affected by several factors; for example, the risk of falling off a ladder is affected by the stability of the ladder and the task being performed whilst on that ladder. In the same way the risk of a new gym member coming to harm whilst completing an unfamiliar task is affected by the quality of instruction given by the fitness professional. To make another comparison, the risk of learner drivers causing harm to themselves or other road users can be minimised by an experienced driving instructor with dual controls in the vehicle. In the same way a qualified and experienced gym instructor overseeing a member in the gym can reduce the risk of that member coming to harm or causing harm to others.

Risk control involves minimising risk through working practices and is designed to achieve the following:

- A reduction in the likelihood of a hazardous event occurring; for example, the high likelihood of someone tripping over a weight on the gym floor (the hazardous event) can be reduced by introducing a ‘tidy gym’ policy.
- A reduction in the consequence of the hazardous event; for example, the likelihood of someone being injured whilst using a harmful substance such as bleach to clean equipment (the consequence of a hazardous event) can be reduced through the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and goggles.
- A reduction in both factors: applying both control measures can drastically reduce overall risk. It is not always possible, however, to totally eliminate risk and it is sometimes necessary to accept that there is inevitably some degree of risk associated with a gym environment; for example, users of CV and resistance machines always have the potential to be harmed.

Whilst it is not always possible to eliminate risk every effort should be made to reduce it and the following control measures can be used to reduce risk in a fitness environment:

**The use of qualified / trained personnel**

Members of staff who are experienced in programme design and have a thorough knowledge of exercise minimise the likelihood of harm coming to users of their fitness facility.

**Health screening**

Screening clients prior to exercise reduces the risk of injury or serious illness from exercising. Screening participants using a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) ensures that it is safe for the person concerned to begin exercising. A verbal pre-screen at the beginning of each session supports a written PAR-Q to highlight any possible risks from new injuries or illnesses.

**Induction**

An induction, which gives new members clear instructions as to how to use equipment and perform exercises, will minimise the risk that they will come to harm in the gym environment.

**Emergency procedures**

These ensure that all staff are trained in the emergency procedures and have a clear understanding of the fire exits and the fire and first aid procedures. They minimise risk to all concerned should an incident or accident occur.
You should now know what risk is and what risk assessment involves:

- risk = likelihood x consequence
- generic risk assessments, and
- dynamic risk assessments.

You should now know how to conduct risk assessments:

- Where is the risk being assessed?
- When is the assessment being carried out?
- Who is conducting the assessment and who is at risk?
- If an activity is being assessed, what is the activity and what equipment is involved?
- If an activity is being assessed, how hazardous is the activity and how likely is the hazard to occur?

You should now know how to control risks within a fitness environment by:

- reducing the likelihood of a hazardous event
- reducing the consequence of a hazardous event, and
- reducing both factors.
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Section 3: Emergency procedures in a fitness environment

Learning outcomes

☐ To know what constitutes an emergency in a fitness environment.

☐ To know when and how to contact the emergency services in an emergency.

☐ To understand what fire and first aid procedures exist within fitness organisations.

☐ To know how to deal with emergency situations in a fitness environment.

Definition of emergency

It is important that those working within the fitness environment are prepared for all eventualities. It is unlikely that fitness instructors will be involved in planning for emergencies but they should have a clear understanding of the procedures in place for all likely emergencies. BusinessDictionary.com defines the word emergency as a ‘sudden, unexpected, or impending situation that may cause injury, loss of life, damage to the property, and/or interference with the normal activities of a person or firm and which, therefore, requires immediate attention and remedial action.’

Examples of potential emergencies are:

- fire
- flood
- accident, injury or sudden illness
- gas leak
- chemical spillage
- break-in / trespasser, and
- bomb threat.

Although some of these emergencies may never happen, the risk is always present. Under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999, the risk has to be assessed and control measures put in place to minimise the risk to all employees, members and visitors.

The main control measure for any emergency, irrespective of its likelihood, is to plan and prepare. Establishing emergency procedures, which give clear and precise instructions as to how staff should act in the event of an emergency occurring, is an important part of planning and preparing for an emergency. Any deviation from the emergency procedures could, in itself, result in a serious injury. Most, although not all, companies practice their emergency procedures annually or even more regularly to evaluate them and ensure that employees are able to follow them correctly and in a timely fashion. The regular practice of emergency procedures will instil employees with confidence so that they can act calmly and follow the procedures in a safe fashion. Members of staff who are well prepared are less likely to act in a manner which could cause clients to panic and lead to further injury.
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Emergency services
It is likely that one of the emergency services (fire brigade, ambulance or police) may have to attend the workplace in the event of an emergency such as fire or a flood. All fitness instructors should know how to contact the emergency services and how to pass on detailed information regarding any emergency taking place. The basic procedure is:

- dial the emergency number 999
- wait for the emergency operator to answer the call.

The operator may then ask the following:

- Which service is required? Only a one word answer (police, fire or ambulance) is necessary.
- The telephone number of the caller. This allows re-contact in the event of a call failure.
- The exact location of the emergency and other details relating to the incident.
- The operator may also give instructions.

Operators who receive emergency calls are highly trained and follow clear procedures to ensure the questions they ask and any instructions they give reduce the risk of harm to anyone, including emergency service personnel, at the scene.

Fire procedures
Health and safety legislation dictates that every organisation must have certain general fire precautions. These are:

- a means of detection and warning in the event of a fire
- a means of escape should a fire occur
- a means of fighting a fire, and
- a programme for training of staff in fire safety.

Fire fighting equipment has to be present on site but how many and which employees are trained to use this equipment will differ in every organisation depending upon company policy. Training in fire safety is, however, imperative and it is essential that all employees are aware of their individual responsibilities should a fire occur. Most organisations now designate certain members of staff as fire marshals whose role it is to liaise with the fire brigade when they arrive on the scene. Fire marshals will also assist in the evacuation of the building and ensure that no one re-enters.

Fire procedures often vary from site to site and within organisations but certain general rules will always apply:

- Upon identification of a fire, the alarm is to be raised immediately.
- All staff, members and visitors must be evacuated from the building. It is usually the responsibility of the duty manager to ensure complete evacuation to a designated meeting point clear of the building.
- A designated fire marshal or the general manager will ensure no one re-enters the building after evacuation.

Generally all employees are involved in the evacuation of the building if the fire alarm is activated and, under duty of care, they will need to ensure that special groups are evacuated safely. This means the following actions may be required:

- Older adults may need to be escorted to the nearest exit or the meeting point.
- Children will need to be escorted out of the building through the nearest exit and taken to the meeting point where someone will be required to stay with them until their parent or a suitable guardian is present.
- Wheelchair users may need to be escorted from the building or taken to an emergency refuge area, if they are not on the ground floor.
First aid procedures

Although the PAR-Q and risk assessments reduce the risk of injury to participants, there is always the possibility that an incident requiring the need for first aid might take place; for example, a gym member might experience chest pains or a class participant might fall off a step box during a circuit training class, rendering them unconscious. It is the responsibility of the member of staff identifying any such incident to call the emergency services and raise the alarm to summon the duty first aider to the scene. The member of staff should then remain at the scene until the duty first aider or emergency services have arrived.

If paramedics are called to the scene they will identify and treat any problems and, if necessary, arrange for members to be taken to the hospital for further tests or treatment. All incidents, especially those involving first aid, must be recorded using the correct documentation. If the incident is later investigated the record of the event will be required and members of staff will be accountable for their actions.

Dealing with an emergency

Although some emergencies are very unlikely to actually take place it is still essential that employees have a clear understanding of how to deal with them should they arise. As has been mentioned earlier in this workbook, guidance pertaining to potential emergencies is provided in the emergency procedures (standard operating procedures). All fitness instructors need to be fully conversant with this important document which should be introduced to all employees upon induction to an organisation. The emergency procedures are usually held in a site file and should be available for all employees to refer to at any time. They are usually reviewed annually and all employees should be refreshed on their contents annually.

Fitness instructors may have to take initial action in dealing with emergencies at leisure centres, health spas or fitness clubs. There is a chronological order for dealing with emergencies known as the ‘4Cs’:

1. Confirm
2. Clear
3. Cordon
4. Control

In order to ensure the safety of all employees, club members and visitors it is important to follow the 4Cs and maintain control throughout the emergency. More details concerning each stage of the 4Cs are given below:

Confirm

This is where an employee may need to confirm that an emergency, for example a fire, is actually taking place and that it is not a false alarm. An emergency can be confirmed by:

- asking a colleague to report back
- using a radio or telephone to call a responsible person in the area
- using CCTV (outside areas), or
- activation of electronic alarms.

Other indications of an emergency might be:

- a telephone threat
- a threatening letter, or
- a suspicious item.

In all cases, once the emergency has been confirmed, it is advisable for key personnel (those in charge of the incident) to refer to the emergency procedures.
Clear
This second stage comes into being if the emergency requires an evacuation. In this case the following should happen:

- All systems available such as the tannoy, fire alarm and evacuation sounders should be used to alert personnel to evacuate the building.
- Visitors, including members of special population groups and anyone requiring additional assistance, should be guided from the premises through the emergency exits.
- In the event of fire all windows and doors should be closed and all belongings left behind.
- In the case of a bomb threat all windows and doors should be opened and all personal belongings taken from the building (unless different instructions are issued).
- In both cases evacuation should be through the most direct route.
- Muster should take place at a pre-determined and published assembly point.

Cordon
The third stage, cordon, is an access control procedure to ensure that people do not enter the danger area once it has been evacuated. This is usually controlled by the duty manager or fire marshal (in case of a fire incident). Depending upon the size of the leisure facility, a fitness instructor may be required to assist in controlling access to the building to make the cordon effective.

Control
The last stage, control, involves maintaining a control point in the case of a serious emergency. Emergency services will be directed to assemble at a control point and will coordinate their response from here. Control points may be located at anything from an adjacent car park to a main road leading to the site.

Three specific examples of emergency situations that occur within fitness facilities are evacuations, suspect packages and bomb threats. Information is given below as to how each of these should be managed.

Evacuations
Employees working in a leisure centre, health spa or fitness club are likely to have to deal with an evacuation at some stage and need to:

- understand evacuation sirens and alarms
- follow instructions concerning the use of high visibility vests or clothing
- keep calm (do not panic members or visitors to the venue)
- understand their responsibilities in the event of an evacuation (as highlighted in the emergency procedures), and
- know all the evacuation routes and muster / assembly points.

All employees should remain vigilant whilst evacuating the building, be prepared to assist colleagues and the emergency services if requested and consider their own safety (they should never place themselves at risk). Members of staff should never try to deal with situations alone or handle any suspicious or dangerous items.

Suspect packages
In the event of a suspect package being found in the workplace the following actions should be taken to limit risk:

- All attempts should be made to identify the owner of the suspect item; for example, a sports bag left in the foyer or in a car park area.
- The area around the package must be isolated.
- The package must not be touched.
- Radios and mobile phones must not be used in the vicinity of the suspicious package.

It is unlikely that most suspicious parcels and packages will be explosive devices but they must always be treated with respect and caution. The 4Cs should be followed as a precaution even if the package does not look particularly harmful: even small explosive packages can be designed to cause significant damage and harm.
**Bomb threats**

Although the risk of a bomb threat at a leisure centre, health spa or fitness club may be low employees still need to be prepared to deal with such a situation. An employee at reception might receive a telephone bomb threat from:

- a misguided practical joker
- a disgruntled member, ex-member, member of the public or member of staff, or
- an extremist or terrorist group.

Any employee receiving such a call should act in accordance with the following guidelines.

- Keep the caller talking and listen carefully.
- Remain calm and speak clearly and slowly.
- Record all of the details immediately. This may include the accent of the caller.
- Always treat the call as genuine.
- Pass all of the details to the duty manager immediately following the completion of the call.
- Inform the emergency service(s) immediately. The duty manager should instruct in this regard.

If a decision is made to evacuate the venue then the 4Cs should be followed in accordance with the emergency procedures for this type of emergency situation. Acting professionally will minimise panic.

**Summary**

You should now know what constitutes an emergency in a fitness environment:

- fire
- flood
- accident involving injury / serious injury
- illness
- gas Leak
- chemical spillage
- break-in / trespasser, or
- bomb threat.

You should now know when and how to contact the emergency services in an emergency:

- call 999
- stay calm
- answer questions clearly, and
- follow instructions given by the operator.

You should now understand what fire and first aid procedures exist within fitness organisations.

You should now know how to deal with the following emergency situations in a fitness environment:

- Evacuations for any reason.
- Suspect packages.
- Bomb threats.
Health, Safety and Welfare in a Fitness Environment

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Learning outcomes

☐ To know what safeguarding children and vulnerable adults means.
☐ To know what policies and procedures should be in place for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in a fitness organisation.
☐ To know the role of a fitness instructor in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
☐ To understand the types of abuse that can occur.
☐ To know common indicators that abuse may be occurring.
☐ To know how to protect oneself from allegations of abuse.
☐ To know the statutory agencies involved in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
☐ To understand confidentiality in the context of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults involves:

- preventing abuse
- promoting welfare, and
- responding to concerns or disclosures of abuse.

Organisations providing services for children and / or vulnerable adults should take all reasonable measures to minimise any risks to their welfare. In addition, if there is a specific concern about a particular child or vulnerable adult, action should be taken to protect that individual from harm (abuse or neglect).

Safeguarding practices most commonly apply to children (anyone under the age of eighteen). The law in relation to the safeguarding of children is well developed and supported by a number of key pieces of government guidance, which place statutory requirements upon organisations providing services for children. In comparison the legislation relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable people is disjointed and underdeveloped. Despite these inconsistencies in legislation, organisations have an equal duty of care towards both groups.

A ‘vulnerable’ adult is generally considered to be a person over the age of eighteen who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This may be due to learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health problems or frailty due to age or illness. It is important to note that having a disability or impairment or being older does not necessarily mean that an individual is vulnerable or would want to be seen in that way.
Safeguarding policies and procedures

Any fitness organisation should have the following in place:

- A safeguarding policy and a procedure to be followed if there are concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.
- A person designated to deal with concerns and / or allegations of abuse.
- Robust recruitment and selection processes for staff and volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults, including the use of enhanced CRB disclosures.
- A written code of conduct which outlines good practice when working with children and vulnerable adults.
- Specific guidance for particular situations; for example, taking children or vulnerable adults away on trips and the use of photography.
- An anti-bullying policy.

There are a number of fundamental principles that should underpin any organisation’s policy and procedures in respect of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults:

- All children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, disability, gender, ethnic or racial origin, religion or beliefs and / or sexual orientation have the right to protection from abuse.
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All organisations must co-operate with each other in responding to concerns of abuse.
- Information should be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis to enable effective decision making and appropriate preventative action.

The role of the fitness instructor in safeguarding

Participation in fitness activity can provide significant benefits for both children and vulnerable adults beyond the obvious health improvements. It can offer opportunities to develop valuable life skills and enhance self-esteem and confidence. Although the majority of children and vulnerable adults will gain from their participation in fitness activity it is an unfortunate reality that some may, as a result, experience some form of abuse. In addition, some children and vulnerable adults participating in fitness activity may be experiencing abuse unconnected to the activity.

Most fitness instructors will come into contact with both children and vulnerable adults within their working environment. Some fitness instructors may develop positive working relationships with children and vulnerable adults taking part in fitness activity and are ideally placed to recognise the signs that may indicate a child or vulnerable adult is being abused.

It is essential, therefore, that fitness instructors who work with children and vulnerable adults know the signs of abuse and how to respond to any concerns they might have about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult. It must be remembered that some of these individuals may be unable to make their own decisions and / or to protect themselves from harm and exploitation.

Those who come into contact with children and / or vulnerable adults as a part of their work or within a voluntary role have a duty to safeguard and promote their welfare and should:

- be familiar with and adopt the relevant organisation’s policy and procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- know how to respond to a disclosure of abuse
- know who to contact within the organisation to report concerns
- know who to contact in social care and the police to report concerns (this particularly applies to anyone who is responsible for making referrals), and
- report any concerns or disclosures of abuse without delay in line with the organisation’s reporting procedures.
Abuse can occur in a wide range of settings and can be highly damaging to the individual, especially when he or she has not been able to disclose the abuse or access support. Children or vulnerable adults who have been abused or neglected can experience serious impairment to their health and wellbeing.

Abuse may be perpetrated by:

- a family member
- a person within an institutional or community setting
- a person known to the victim, or, more rarely a stranger, or
- an adult or adults or a child or children.

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There are a number of different forms of abuse:

**Physical abuse**

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness.

**Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional maltreatment such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects. It may involve conveying to children or vulnerable adults that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing participation in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. Serious bullying is a form of emotional abuse and is often identified as an additional type of abuse with anti-bullying policies becoming commonplace in most organisations. Emotional abuse also includes the exploitation or corruption of children or vulnerable adults.

**Sexual abuse**

This involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child or vulnerable adult is aware of what is happening, has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting. The activities may involve physical contact; for example, rape and sexual assault or non-contact activities; for example, involving children or vulnerable adults in looking at or in the production of sexual online images, watching sexual activities and encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour.

**Neglect**

May involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
- protect a child or vulnerable adult from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (this includes the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment,
- respond to a child’s basic emotional needs.

In relation to vulnerable adults the following types of abuse are also recognised:

**Financial abuse**

Includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, and the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

**Discriminatory abuse**

Includes harassment, victimisation, slurs or other similar treatment because of disability, race, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation or age.
Indicators of abuse

It is important to acknowledge that children and vulnerable adults often find it extremely difficult to disclose abuse. It can be particularly challenging for vulnerable adults or children with communication difficulties.

A number of factors can increase vulnerability to abuse and bullying. These include social isolation, communication and learning difficulties, a lack of understanding of boundaries and the need for assistance with personal care.

Abuse is not always easy to identify and there are often perfectly innocent explanations for certain signs. The following list details some of the signs that may indicate that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries; for example, bruising, cuts and burns, particularly those located on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- Medical problems; for example, genital infections, pregnancy and difficulty walking or sitting.
- Untreated injuries or medical problems.
- A disclosure or partial disclosure of what appears to be an abusive act.
- Another child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour; for example, becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Disturbed behaviour; for example, depression, sudden withdrawal from activities, loss of previous skills, nightmares, self-harm, showing fear or aggression to one particular person, loss of appetite or difficulty in keeping food down.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- A controlling relationship between a child or vulnerable adult and the parent or carer.
- Difficulty in making friends or being prevented from socialising with others.
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Losing weight or rapid weight gain for no apparent reason.
- Poor personal hygiene; for example, being unwashed or unkempt.
- Confusion.
- Low self-esteem.
- Inappropriate use of restraints.
- Failure by a parent or carer to ensure privacy or personal dignity.
- Evidence of lack of respect and substandard service offered to a vulnerable adult.

The above list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators should not be accepted as proof that abuse is taking place. It is not the responsibility of fitness instructors to decide that abuse is occurring but it is their duty to report their concerns, irrespective of how they arise or whether they involve the conduct of someone within the fitness industry or someone within the wider community.

In the event that a child or vulnerable adult makes a direct disclosure of abuse a fitness instructor should act in the following way:

- Stay calm and ensure that the individual feels safe and is not at any immediate risk.
- Listen carefully allowing the individual to continue at his or her own pace.
- Explain that the information being given may have to be shared with others.
- Keep questioning to a minimum, except where clarification is required to provide a clear and accurate understanding of what has been disclosed.
- Provide reassurance to the individual and explain what will happen next and with whom the information will be shared.
- As soon as possible make a note of what was disclosed including any specific dates and times or names mentioned.
- Discuss the concerns with a manager or designated safeguarding officer.
- If appropriate, seek advice, without necessarily identifying the child or vulnerable adult in question, from social care or the NSPCC (if the concern relates to a child).
The fitness instructor should not act as follows:

- Panic or allow any shock or distaste to show.
- Promise to keep the matter secret or dismiss the concern.
- Attempt to investigate concerns or disclosures. Abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal prosecution and nothing should be done to place any police investigation in jeopardy; for example, asking a child or vulnerable adult leading questions or attempting to investigate the allegations.
- Approach the accused person or make negative comments.

Remember: instructors are not responsible for determining whether abuse has occurred but they are responsible for ensuring any concerns that they may have are reported.

Protecting oneself from accusations of abuse

Many of the measures which should be taken by responsible fitness instructors to safeguard the children and vulnerable adults with whom they are working also serve to provide those instructors with protection and reduce the likelihood of allegations of abuse being raised.

The following guidelines should be adopted as a matter of good practice:

- Avoid physical contact that is not necessary to support learning.
- Be aware of those situations and activities which are more likely to lead to an allegation of abuse and plan so that the risk of any such accusation is minimised.
- Be aware of professional boundaries which place safe limits on the relationship between fitness instructor and client.
- Always try to be visible when working with children or vulnerable adults.
- Ensure that all poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour is challenged.
- Empower children and vulnerable adults by discussing their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what to do if there is a problem.

Fitness instructors should never act as follows:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse a child or vulnerable adult.
- Develop physical or sexual relationships with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Develop any form of relationship with a child or vulnerable adult which could, in any way, be deemed inappropriate, exploitative or abusive.
- Place a child or vulnerable adult in a position where they may be at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner.
- Spend time alone with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Allow children or vulnerable adults with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised.
- Sleep in the same room as a child or vulnerable adult on a residential event.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child or vulnerable adult is able to do for themselves.
Workbook

Level 2

Health, Safety and Welfare in a Fitness Environment

Statutory agencies

The Children Act 1989 identifies the organisations that have the statutory authority to make enquiries into concerns of child abuse. These are:

- Social Care (formerly Social Services)
- police
- NSPCC.

Children’s Social Care has a duty to provide services for children in need and to make enquiries where a child is likely to be suffering, or is suffering, significant harm. Adult Social Care has similar responsibilities for vulnerable adults.

The police are responsible for upholding the law, preventing crime and disorder and protecting citizens in line with criminal law. They play a key role when a crime against a child or vulnerable adult is alleged to have taken place and will investigate the criminal history of the suspected offender. In relation to children who have allegedly been abused Social Care and the police will conduct a joint investigation. It is likely that a similar approach may be taken in some cases involving vulnerable adults.

The NSPCC is the only other organisation authorised to initiate legal proceedings relating to alleged abuse of children under the Children Act 1989.

It may often be necessary for an organisation which works with children or vulnerable adults to report concerns of abuse to one or more of the statutory agencies. All such organisations should have a procedure for reporting abuse within their safeguarding policy. This procedure should include the following steps:

- In situations of immediate danger, take urgent action by calling the relevant emergency body; for example, the police, an ambulance, or the general practitioner.
- Individuals with concerns should report to the designated safeguarding officer or, if he or she is not available, a senior member of staff.
- If the concern is of possible abuse the designated officer or senior member of staff must refer the matter without delay to Social Care and/or the police. If it is believed that there is no immediate danger the initial referral should be made to Social Care. Concerns that arise outside office hours should be made to the Social Care emergency duty service or to the police.
Confidentiality

Confidential information is information that is not normally in the public domain or readily available from another source. Concerns or disclosures about abuse are likely to be confidential. A duty of confidence arises when one person provides information to another in circumstances where it is reasonable to expect that the information will be held in confidence.

The term ‘need to know’ is relevant in the context of sharing confidential information. It means that confidential details should only be disclosed to those people who have to be informed in order to protect a child or vulnerable adult from harm.

The key rules concerning the sharing of confidential information are as follows:

- Confidential information should only be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis when it is in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult.
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy.
- Informed consent to disclose information should be sought from the child or vulnerable adult. If this is not possible (some individuals may lack the capacity to provide informed consent) and there is a reasonable belief that failure to disclose would place the child, vulnerable adult or others at increased risk of significant harm and / or would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of serious crime, information should be shared without consent.
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Level 2
Health, Safety and Welfare in a Fitness Environment

Summary

You should now know that safeguarding children and vulnerable adults means:

- preventing abuse
- promoting welfare, and
- responding to concerns or disclosures of abuse.

You should now know the policies and procedures which should be in place in a fitness organisation:

- All children and vulnerable adults have the right to protection from abuse.
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- All suspicion and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All organisations must co-operate with each other in responding to concerns of abuse.
- Information should be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis to enable effective decision making and appropriate preventative action.

You should now know the role of a fitness instructor in safeguarding:

- Be familiar with and adopt the relevant organisation’s policy and procedures.
- Know how to respond to a disclosure of abuse.
- Know who to contact within the organisation to report concerns.
- Know who to contact in Social Care and the police to report concerns (particularly if responsible for making referrals).
- Report any concerns or disclosures of abuse without delay in line with the organisation’s reporting procedures.

You should now understand the types of abuse that can occur:

- physical
- emotional including bullying
- sexual
- neglect
- financial, or
- discriminatory.

You should now know the signs which may indicate that abuse is occurring.

You should now know how instructors can protect themselves from false allegations of abuse.

You should now know the statutory agencies involved in safeguarding:

- Social Care (formerly Social Services)
- police, and
- NSPCC.

You should now understand confidentiality in the context of safeguarding:

- Confidential information should only be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis when it is in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult.
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy.
- Informed consent to disclose information should be sought from the child or vulnerable adult.