



# **Manual Handling Compliance Code**

**Reviewed : January 2026**

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## **1. Introduction**

This Compliance Code contains standards on the management of manual handling operations. It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that manual handling activities are managed in line with this document in any area under their control.

Manual handling is the transporting or supporting of loads by hand or bodily force, which includes, carrying, lifting, pushing and pulling. Almost a third of injuries at work are caused by manual handling. Manual handling may result in adverse health that is caused by a single accident (e.g. strained/torn muscles, dropped loads, cuts/abrasions etc.) or sustained over a longer period (bad back, worn joints etc.).

## **2. Duties of the employer**

The employer has a duty to: -

- identify manual handling operations in areas under its control through the completion of a general risk assessment.
- take steps to reduce or eliminate manual handling operations.
- ensure risk assessments of unavoidable hazardous manual handling activities are carried out and cross referred to in the main risk assessment.
- ensure control measures identified in the risk assessment have been implemented.
- ensure employees have been consulted and provided with information and/or training on manual handling.

## **3. Duties of the employee**

Employees have a duty to: -

- assist with the completion of manual handling risk assessments and handling plans.
- Complete mandatory manual handling training sessions.
- report all manual handling incidents and near misses using the West Norfolk Academies Trust Incident reporting system
- make use of any equipment provided.
- carry out first use/pre-use checks and report equipment when it is faulty, unsafe or no longer meets the need of the service user.
- inform managers of any health condition which affects his or her ability to undertake manual-handling operations safely.
- follow policies, procedures and safe systems of work.

## **4 Manual handling risk assessment**

Manual handling is a normal requirement in everyday life. From putting away groceries, loading the car or going to the gym. However, where the requirement becomes regular and repetitive as part of a person's employment then the risk associated must be assessed.

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring manual handling activity is assessed in their area and where the task is identified as regular and repetitive then a suitable assessment of risk must be carried out.

Line Managers can adequately assess the majority of manual handling tasks using the Manual handling Filter guidance provided in Section 2 of this Compliance Code and findings can be recorded using template provided at Annex A. Where the filter indicates a full assessment is required the template provided in Annex B should be used.

### **4.1 Assessing inanimate loads (Objects)**

When assessing inanimate loads, the filter guidance provided should be completed initially.

Where a full assessment is required the template at Annex B should be used.

## **4.2 Assessing animate load (People)**

Where employees are providing physical care or assistance a risk assessment of all tasks must be completed using a departmental specific risk assessment and following departmental specific guidance. For some common moving and handling tasks involving people, generic departmental risk assessments will exist.

Within WNAT the responsibility for the completion of manual handling of individuals is part of the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) role.

## **5. Recording of risk assessments**

In all cases risk assessments (whether through the filter or full assessment) must be recorded in writing, kept in the workplace, and made available to employees involved in the activity. The person who performed the risk assessment should make all employees involved aware of the control measures in place.

It is recommended that risk assessments are recorded electronically to allow ease of access via file sharing.

## **6. Reviewing the assessment**

To ensure control measures remain effective, all assessments should be reviewed under the following circumstances:

- Whenever there are significant changes to the task, the load, the environment or individual's capability (ill health).
- If there has been an accident, incident or near miss.
- At regular intervals

Both inanimate and animate risk assessments should be reviewed annually, even if there are no significant changes. The assessment should be signed and dated to confirm the review has taken place.

## **7. Training**

### **7.1 Manual Handling Training**

Caretaking staff are required to complete annual manual handling training due to the nature of their role. Other staff should complete manual handling training as when the need is identified by their department leads. A record of training is to be maintained.

### **8.2 Risk assessment training**

Managers with responsibility for risk assessing are recommended to complete a risk assessing course. For further information see WNAT Risk Assessing Compliance Code.

## **8. Health**

New employees should be aware of the moving and handling requirements of the job prior to appointment where relevant.

Following injury or ill health the employee is to inform their manager to allow alterations to be made to their role following any medical advice provided. It is the manager's responsibility to decide whether any adjustments recommended can reasonably be put in place.

Where an existing employee's health condition is being affected by the manual handling activity, or where the manual handling activity causes a health condition, the manager should refer them to occupational health.

Where an employee has advised their manager they are pregnant, the manager should ensure that manual handling is included with in the New and Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment. with the employee. Further advice is available in the WNAT New and Expectant Mothers Compliance Code.

## **10. Reporting injury and ill health**

All incidents are to be reported using the WNAT Incident reporting system. This will allow prompt investigations to be conducted and confirm if the incident is reportable to the HSE as per the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

# Manual Handling Compliance Code

## Section 2 – Manual Handling Filter Guidance

### 1. Introduction

This assessment filter is relevant to:

- Lifting and lowering;
- Carrying for short distances;
- Pushing and pulling; and
- Handling while seated.

The purpose of the filter is to identify the tasks and loads that are unlikely to cause injury and therefore those tasks and loads that may not require a detailed assessment.

The filter should not be used as a table of safe or approved weights that can be lifted but as an **indication** of what a handler should be able to move, lift and lower easily and safely. They will usually provide a reasonable level of protection to around 95% of working men and women. It should be noted, however, that even for less strenuous lifting operations falling outside the filter, measures should still be taken to ensure the level of demand placed on employees is reduced to as low a level as possible.

Where activities are considered to be low-risk, use of the filter should quickly confirm or deny this. If the risk falls within the guidelines, no other form of risk assessment is usually required unless the task is to be carried out by employees from more vulnerable groups, such as pregnant workers, young workers, elderly workers, those with a significant health problem or who have suffered a recent manual handling injury.

It should be noted that the filter guidelines are only relevant when the load is easy to grasp and the lifting operation is being undertaken in a safe working environment.

The filter is less likely to be useful if there is a strong chance the work activities to be assessed involve significant risks from manual handling, or if the activity is complex. Where it is suspected the activity will not fall within the guidelines, it may be more time effective to undertake a more detailed assessment from the outset and complete a full manual handling risk assessment (Annex B)

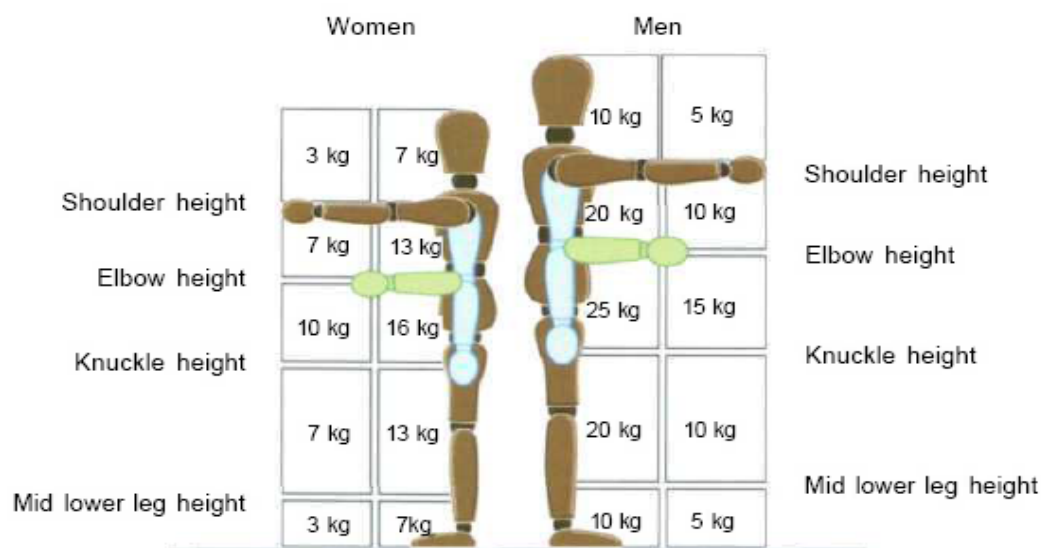
A more detailed assessment will also be needed if:

- The activity does not come within the guidelines e.g. lifting and lowering unavoidably takes place beyond the box zones (see Figure 1)
- There are other considerations to consider
- The assumptions made by the filter are not applicable to the lifting operation e.g. if the employee is unable to hold the load against the body when carrying
- The filter cannot be applied quickly

### 2. Using the filter

The filter is in several parts and covers lifting and lowering, frequent lifting, carrying, twisting, pushing and pulling and handling when seated. The guideline figures in each part are aimed at aiding the user in assessing the task. The Assessment Filter Table should be used for recording the findings from using the filter and in making a judgment on whether or not a full assessment is required.

Figure1 - Lifting and lowering



Each box in the diagram contains a guideline weight for lifting and lowering in that zone. Using the diagram enables the assessor to consider the vertical and horizontal position of the hands as they move the load, the height of the individual handler and the reach of the individual handler. The diagram shows that the guideline weights are reduced if handling with arms extended, or at high or low levels. These are the areas where injuries are most likely.

Observe the work activity being assessed and compare it to the diagram. First decide which box or boxes the lifter's hands pass through when moving the load. Then assess the maximum weight being handled. If it is less than the figure given in the box, the operation is within the guidelines.

If the lifter's hands enter more than one box during the operation, then the smallest weight figure should be applied. An intermediate weight can be chosen if the hands are close to a boundary between boxes.

The guideline figures for lifting and lowering assume:

- The load is easy to grasp with both hands;
- The operation takes place in reasonable working conditions; and
- The handler is in a stable body position.

### 3. Frequent lifting and lowering

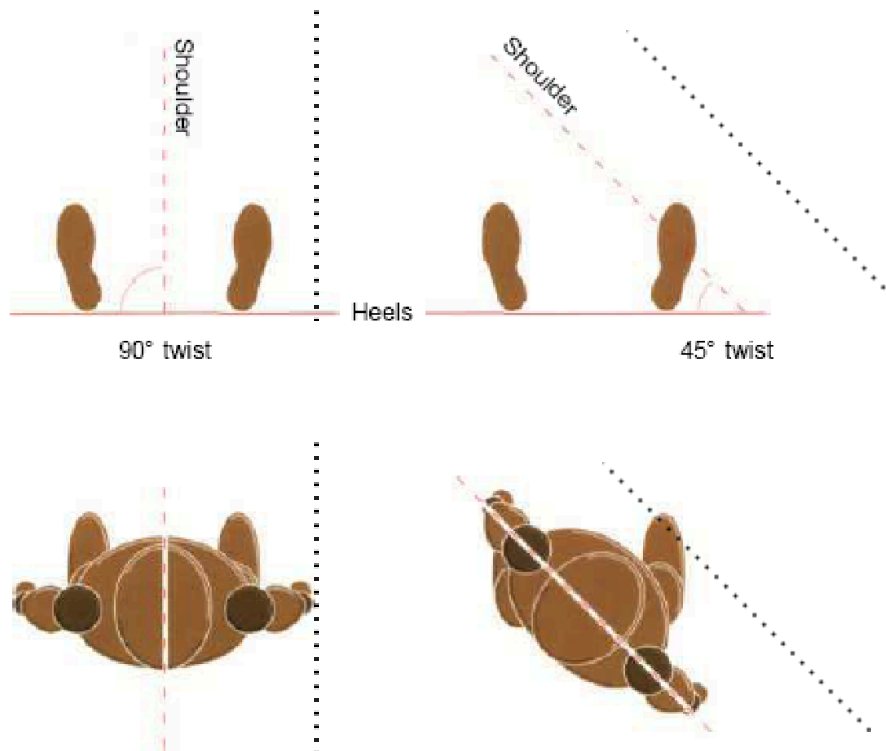
The guideline figures for lifting and lowering in the above diagram are for relatively infrequent operations - up to approximately 30 lifts per hour or one lift every two minutes. The guideline figures should be reduced if the operation is repeated more often. As a rough guide:

Where operations are repeated	Figures should be reduced by
Once or twice per minute	30%
Five to eight times per minute	50%
More than 12 times per minute	80%

Even where the above conditions are satisfied, a more detailed risk assessment should be made where:

- The worker does not control the pace of work;
- Pauses for rest are inadequate or there is no change of activity which provides an opportunity to use different muscles; or
- The handler must support the load for any length of time.

## 4. Twisting



In many cases manual handling operations will involve some twisting. Twisting is the action of moving the upper body while the feet remain static (see above). The combination of twisting and lifting and twisting, stooping and lifting are particularly stressful on the back. Therefore, a detailed assessment should normally be made where the handling involves twisting and turning.

However, if the operation is:

- Relatively infrequent (up to approximately 30 operations per hour or one lift every two minutes); and
- There are no other posture problems,

Then the guideline figures in the relevant part of this filter can be used, but with a suitable reduction according to the amount the handler twists to the side during the operation. As a rough guide:

If handler twists through (from front)	Guideline figures should be reduced by:
45°	10%
90°	20%

Where the handling involves turning, i.e. moving in another direction as the lift is in progress and twisting, then a detailed assessment should normally be made.

## 5. Carrying

The guideline figures for lifting and lowering apply to carrying operations where the load is:

- Held against the body;
- Carried no further than about 10 m without resting.

Where the load can be carried securely on the shoulder without first having to be lifted (as, for example when unloading sacks from a lorry) the guideline figures can be applied to carrying distances in excess of 10 m.



A more detailed assessment should be made for all carrying operations if:

- The load is carried over a longer distance without resting; or
- The hands are below knuckle height or above elbow height (due to static loading on arm muscles).

## 6. Pushing and pulling

For pushing and pulling operations (whether the load is slid, rolled or supported on wheels) the guideline figures assume the force is applied with the hands, between knuckle and shoulder height. It is also assumed that the distance involved is no more than about 20 m. If these assumptions are not met, a more detailed risk assessment is required.

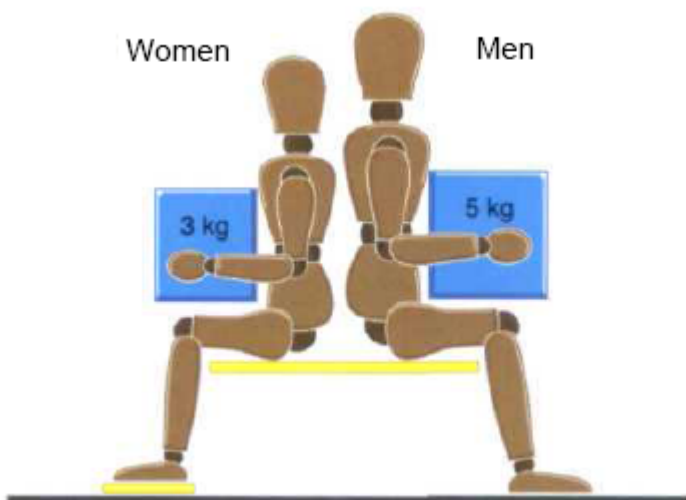
	Men	Women
Guideline figure for stopping or starting a load)	20kg (about 200 newtons)	15 kg (about 150 newtons)
Guideline figure for keeping the load in motion	10kg (about 100 newtons)	7 kg (about 70 newtons)

As a rough guide the amount of force that needs to be applied to move a load over a flat, level surface using a well-maintained handling aid is at least 2% of the load weight. For example, if the load weight is 400 kg, then the force needed to move the load is 8 kg. The force needed will be larger, perhaps a lot larger, if conditions are not perfect (e.g. wheels not in the right position or a device that is poorly maintained).

Moving an object over soft or uneven surfaces also requires higher forces. On an uneven surface, the force needed to start the load moving could increase to 10% of the load weight, although this might be offset to some extent by using larger wheels. Pushing and pulling forces will also be increased if workers have to negotiate a slope or ramp.

Even where the guideline figures above are met, a detailed risk assessment will be necessary if risk factors such as uneven floors, confined spaces, or trapping hazards are present. There is no specific limit to the distance over which the load is pushed or pulled as long as there are adequate opportunities for rest or recovery.

## 7. Handling while seated



The basic guideline figures for handling operations carried out while seated, shown above are 5kg for men and 3 kg for women. These guidelines only apply when the hands are within the box zone indicated. If handling beyond the box zone is unavoidable, a more detailed assessment should be made.

## **8. Recording findings and reaching a decision**

For each task, use the filter to assess each of the activities involved (some tasks may only involve one activity, e.g. lifting and lowering, while others may involve several). The Assessment Filter Table (Annex A) should be used to record the results and can be referred to later on if problems are associated with the task.

Identify if each activity being performed comes within the guidelines and if there are other considerations to consider (a note should be made of these). Then make a final judgement of whether the task needs a full risk assessment. (Annex B)

It is worth remembering that if this cannot be achieved quickly, then a full risk assessment is required. Where doubt remains, a more detailed risk assessment should always be made.

## ANNEX A – WNAT Manual Handling Compliance Code

### Manual handling filter form

Notes on use:

- Where use of the filter determines a detailed assessment is not needed, this table should be completed and retained as a record that the filter process has been applied.
- Where it is expected that an activity will exceed the safe guidelines of the filter, the assessor may decide to undertake a detailed assessment of the activity from the outset, avoiding the filter process.
- If the filter identifies a detailed assessment is required, this should be undertaken using the Manual Handling Assessment Form.

Activity	For each activity, does the task fall outside the guidelines? Y/N	Are there any other considerations that indicate a problem? Y/N	Are further actions needed to reduce risk/ensure it remains within the safe guidelines?	Is a more detailed assessment required? Y/N
Lifting and lowering				
Carrying				
Pushing and pulling				
Handling while seated				

Assessor's name:	Signature:
Assessment Date:	Review Date:

## ANNEX B – WNAT Manual Handling Compliance Code

### Manual Handling Risk Assessment Form

Description of the manual handling task and load:	
Personnel involved:	Location/s:

Summary of activity	
Load weight	
Carrying distance	
Frequency of task	
Pushing/pulling distance	

Follow steps 1-3 to establish whether a detailed assessment needs carrying out:

		Yes/No	Actions
Step 1	Does the task fall within the guidelines of the Manual Handling Filter Guidance?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If no or the expected answer is no, go to step 2</li><li>• If yes, a detailed assessment may not be needed. It may be appropriate to just complete the Manual Handling Filter Form and keep it as a record that an assessment of the task was carried out.</li></ul>
Step 2	Can the manual handling task be avoided?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If no, go on to step 3</li><li>• If yes, <b>please detail how the manual handling task is to be avoided in the space below</b>, then sign and date form. The assessment is complete.</li></ul>
Step 3	Can movement of the load be automated or mechanised?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If no continue to step 4 and carry out a detailed assessment</li><li>• If yes, <b>please detail how the activity will be automated or mechanised in the space below</b>, then sign and date form. The assessment is complete</li></ul>

Note to assessors: Manual handling operatives who will be undertaking this task should be consulted during the assessment process

Checklist point	Applies Yes/No	Information about controls and recommendations	Action to be taken	By whom and date
<b>The task</b> - Do the task(s) involve:				
Holding loads away from the trunk		Moving a load away from the trunk significantly increases the general level of stress on the lower back Eliminate obstacles needing to be reached over or into that prevent the handler's feet being placed beneath or adjacent to the load.		
Twisting the trunk?		Stress on the lower back increases significantly if the trunk is twisted, particularly when supporting or lifting a load. Avoid twisting by changing body position to face direction of intended movement. Move the feet, do not twist.		
Stooping?		Stress on the lower back increases when the handler stoops (by bending the back or by leaning forward with the back straight) as the trunk is thrown forward, adding its weight to the load being handled. Store heavy loads around waist height. Storage above and below this height should be restricted to lighter loads/loads handled infrequently. Handling techniques should favour the use of leg muscles rather than bending at the waist.		
Reaching upwards?		Reaching upwards places additional stress on the arms and back and control of the load becomes more difficult. Provide access equipment when positioning loads above head height. Persons should not be expected to climb racking to access shelving etc.		

Large vertical movement?		<p>Large vertical lifting distances are considerably more demanding physically than small ones.</p> <p>Lifting or lowering through a large distance may necessitate a change of grip part way, increasing the risk of injury.</p> <p>Avoid lifts commencing at floor level where possible. Where unavoidable they should preferably terminate no higher than waist height. Where possible, alter the task/workplace layout to provide a mid-point resting place.</p>		
Long carrying distances?		<p>Carrying loads for excessive distances prolongs physical stress leading to fatigue and increased risk of injury. When further than about 10 m the physical demands of carrying the load surpass those of lifting and lowering it and individual capability will be reduced.</p> <p>Alter the task or workplace layout to reduce carrying distances.</p>		
Strenuous pushing or pulling?		<p>The risk of injury is increased if pushing or pulling is carried out with the hands much below knuckle height or above shoulder height.</p> <p>Ensure a secure footing and that hands are applied to the load at a height between waist and shoulder wherever possible.</p> <p>When safe to do so, pushing with the back against the load enables the strong leg muscles to exert the force</p>		
Unpredictable movement of loads?		<p>Secure contents to prevent them moving during lifting e.g. using lightweight materials to pad objects that may roll/slide etc when carried in boxes.</p>		

Repetitive handling?		A modest load handled very frequently can create as large a risk of injury as one-off handling of a more substantial load.		
Insufficient rest or recovery?		Try avoiding processes where the handler cannot vary the rate of work. Mild fatigue, which might quickly be relieved by a momentary pause or a brief spell doing another operation using different muscles, can soon become more pronounced, leading to an increase risk of injury.		
A work rate imposed by a process?		Check whether the process be changed.		
<b>The load</b> - Is/are the load(s):				
Heavy?		When ordering materials, specify lower weight loads. Where possible, break load up.		
Bulky/unwieldy?		A load's shape (and whether it has any handholds) will affect the way in which it can be held, manoeuvred and the ease with which it can be controlled. Handling a load where any of its dimensions exceed about 75 cm is likely to pose an increased risk of injury, especially if more than one dimension exceeds this size. When ordering materials, specify smaller, more manageable loads.		
Difficult to grasp?		Consider the size, surface texture and nature of the load. If difficult to grasp, consider providing handles, hand grips, indents or placing the load securely in a container which is easier to grasp. Handholds should be wide enough to clear the breadth of the palm, and deep enough to accommodate the knuckles and any gloves that may need to be worn.		

Unstable/ unpredictable?		Establish whether packaging will allow objects to shift unexpectedly during handling. Where the load as a whole lacks rigidity it may be preferable to use slings or other aids to maintain effective control during handling.		
Intrinsically harmful e.g. sharp/hot?		Establish whether the load's external surface is hazardous e.g. sharp edges, rough surfaces, hot/cold etc Also identify whether any of these properties would impair grip, discourage good posture or otherwise interfere with safe handling.		
<b>The working environment - Are there:</b>				
Constraints on posture e.g. lack of space, adjustability of workstation etc?		Does the working environment hinder the adoption of good posture e.g. restricted headroom, furniture, fixtures or other obstructions, narrow gangways etc.		
Poor floors e.g. slippery surfaces, cracks, slip, trip hazards etc		Clear spills (water, oil, soap, food scraps and other substances) promptly. Consider the possibility of slip-resistant surfacing. Ensure potential trip hazards are eliminated		
Variations in levels – poor shelving?		Are larger awkward loads being moved to/from appropriate levels.		
Obstructions preventing safe passage and blocking gangways along the carrying route		Keep gangways and other working areas clear to allow adequate room to manoeuvre. Ensure sufficient clear floor space and head room. Ensure high standard of housekeeping.		
Adverse climatic conditions e.g. strong winds, cold/hot		High winds could catch a load (particularly when bulky) and destabilise the handler. Consider relocating the handling operation, taking a different route, provision of handling		



temperatures, humid conditions?		aids to give greater control of the load, or team handling. Avoid extremes of temperature, excessive humidity or poor ventilation.		
Poor lighting conditions?		Ensure there is sufficient and well-directed light		
<b>Individual capability</b> - Does the job:				
Require unusual physical capability e.g. strength, height, reach, stamina etc?		If handling aids are unavailable, team handling should be introduced when operations would be difficult, unsafe or beyond an individual's capability. When team handling ensures there is adequate access to the person or object being moved and that there is enough room to manoeuvre as a group. The lifting capability of a two-person team is approximately two thirds the sum of their individual capabilities, for a three person team the figure is one half the sum of their individual capabilities.		
Present additional risk to potentially vulnerable groups e.g. elderly/young, pregnant, those with health problems etc?		Generally, the risks are increased for females, persons in their teens and those over fifty years old. Allow for any health problem e.g. back trouble or hernia, which is known to exist with a member of staff. Pregnancy has significant implications for the risk of manual handling injury. Hormonal changes increase the susceptibility to injury, and postural problems may increase, particularly for women who may handle loads during the three months following a return to work after childbirth.		

Require special information, instruction or training?		<p>Ensure operatives are provided the information or training necessary to safely perform the operation</p> <p>Provide staff with information on the range of tasks to be undertaken, the likely weight of the load or person, and the heaviest side of any load without a centrally positioned centre of gravity.</p> <p>Provide training for staff on how to recognise harmful manual handling tasks, appropriate systems of work, the use of mechanical aids and good lifting techniques.</p>		
Other factors:				
Is movement or posture affected by clothing or personal protective equipment?		<p>Ensure clothing is well fitting, suitable for the task and does not prevent the handler from achieving the optimum handling position.</p> <p>Avoid tight fitting clothing during handling and lifting.</p> <p>Pockets etc that may snag on the load/handling aid should be concealed.</p>		
Is there an absence of the correct/suitable PPE being worn?		<p>Alternative methods of handling may need to be considered if the use of PPE leads to new risks from the contents of the load.</p>		
Do workers feel that there is poor communication between users of equipment and others, e.g. managers/suppliers		<p>Ensure manager has appropriate communication skills.</p>		
Do workers feel that there is a lack of		<p>Identify what improvements in communication the workers feel could be made.</p> <p>Make employees aware of plan of work</p>		

consideration given to planning and scheduling of tasks/work breaks?				
Are there sudden changes in workload without mechanisms for dealing with change?		Ensure contingency plans are in place. Make workers aware what action they should take in these circumstances.		

Assessor's name:	Signature:
Assessment Date:	Review Date: