

Appendix 3

**London Borough of Barnet
Adult Social Services**

Risk Assessment Matrix

April 2009

Freedom of Information Act Protective Marking Information	
Protective marking	NOT RESTRICTED
Suitable for publication scheme	Yes
Title and version	Risk Assessment Matrix
Purpose	Managerial action
Relevant to	All Adult Social Services
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Summary	Risk Assessment Matrix
Department	Adult Social Services
Date last reviewed	March 2010

Introduction

New complaints will be assessed and categorised in line with the Department of Health Guidance "Listening, Responding, Improving - A Guide to Better Customer Care" (see excerpt at Annex A below).

All complaints are to be assessed for seriousness so that a proportionate and timely approach to dealing with the complaint can be adopted. Where a complaint is categorised as **straightforward** (low or moderate risk), attempts will be made to consider whether the complaint can be resolved over the phone or by holding a meeting with the complainant at an early stage, but still ensuring that such complaints are investigated properly and to the satisfaction of the complainant. If a complaint is assessed as **serious and/or complex** (high or extreme risk), the complaint will require either an external independent investigation, or an internal investigation which will be independent of the service complained about.

Examples of situations in each category are described below for illustrative purposes only.

Examples of complaints categorisation following risk assessment

Low Risk complaints (simple, non-complex issues)

- Carer is late - one occasion
- Carer fails to attend - one occasion
- Message left for care manager and they have not called back
- Complaint from service user regarding charging
- Transport problems
- Assessment disagreement
- Delayed or cancelled appointments
- Event resulting in minor harm (e.g. cut, strain)
- Loss of property
- Lack of cleanliness
- Single failure to meet care needs
- Social care records missing

Moderate Risk Complaints (several issues relating to a shorter period of care)

- Carer is late to prompt medication - non life threatening
- Significant delay in completing a social care assessment
- Appeal against funding panel decision
- Staff attitude or communication (rude, insensitive, condescending etc)
- Event resulting in moderate harm
- Delayed discharge
- Failure to meet care needs
- Miscommunication or misinformation
- Failure to report non-access to service user's home
- Carer's failure to refer to medical help where required (e.g. pressure sores, infection, etc)

High Risk Complaints (multiple issues, longer period of care, often more than one organisation or individual)

- Repeated or unresolved issues from moderate list (see above)
- Event resulting in serious harm
- Gross professional misconduct
- Abuse or neglect

ASSESSING HOW SERIOUS THE COMPLAINT IS

By correctly assessing the seriousness of a complaint about a service, the right course of action can be taken. Many NHS and social care organisations use a three-step process to gauge the impact of complaints on the people involved, the potential risks to the organisation and the response required.

It is useful to categorise a complaint when you first receive it, and then review that category based on the results of any investigation. It is also important to remember that a complaint can have a very different effect on an organisation compared with an individual. This is especially important if someone is vulnerable for any reason, such as poor health, communication difficulties or recent bereavement.

The following process can help you assess the seriousness of an issue and take the relevant action.

Step 1: Decide how serious the issue is

Seriousness	Description
Low	<p>Unsatisfactory service or experience not directly related to care. No impact or risk to provision of care.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Unsatisfactory service or experience related to care, usually a single resolvable issue. Minimal impact and relative minimal risk to the provision of care or the service. No real risk of litigation.</p>
Medium	<p>Service or experience below reasonable expectations in several ways, but not causing lasting problems. Has potential to impact on service provision. Some potential for litigation.</p>
High	<p>Significant issues regarding standards, quality of care and safeguarding of or denial of rights. Complaints with clear quality assurance or risk management issues that may cause lasting problems for the organisation, and so require investigation. Possibility of litigation and adverse local publicity.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Serious issues that may cause long-term damage, such as grossly substandard care, professional misconduct or death. Will require immediate and in-depth investigation. May involve serious safety issues. A high probability of litigation and strong possibility of adverse national publicity.</p>

Step 2: Decide how likely the issue is to recur

Likelihood	Description
Rare	Isolated or 'one off' – slight or vague connection to service provision.
Unlikely	Rare – unusual but may have happened before.
Possible	Happens from time to time – not frequently or regularly.
Likely	Will probably occur several times a year.
Almost certain	Recurring and frequent, predictable.

Step 3: Categorise the risk

Seriousness	Likelihood of recurrence				
	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost certain
Low	Low				
		Moderate			
Medium					
			High		
High				Extreme	