

ROVIs and risk

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What is risk?

The Oxford English Dictionary says it's

“a situation involving danger”

Or

“the possibility that something unpleasant may happen”

Can we eliminate risk?

Very unlikely to do that.

Its about **reducing** or **minimising** risk or taking **acceptable** risks.

You need to try to predict what could happen and make situation as safe as its appropriate to be.

What are the riskiest parts of your job?

- ????

Consider what risks could be

If you know what potential risks are you can try to minimise them

- What could happen?
- How likely is it to happen?
- What would consequences be?

Elements of client risk

- Their age
- Maturity
- Level of competence
- Level of cognition
- Health issues/medication
- Hearing loss

Introduce risk

- Hill & Ponder (1976, Orientation and mobility techniques: a guide for the practitioner) advise that clients should be exposed to risk so that they are able to cope with different travel situations.
- Brearley (1982, Risk and Social Work) states that “if help is over-protective and removes the elements of risk or challenge in people’s lives then there is a danger that they may become lifeless and apathetic.”

Potential high risk situations

- First time client practices a skill you taught them without you being there (flying Solo)
- At the start of training when client's skills and behaviours are still somewhat unknown
- By not assessing need or priority of clients on waiting list (more so if it's a long wait)
- Working with people who don't have capacity – e.g. children or those with dementia

Good practice

- Discuss issues with supervisor or another ROVI
- Ask client about level of risk they feel happy with
- Prioritise cases – who is in immediate need?
- Ask for advice on the RWPN forum
- Learn from/reflect on errors – how to do things differently next time
- Not limiting service (i.e. 6 weeks support only)
- Not charging for equipment or minor adaptations assessed as needed at a cost of £1,000 or less

Is doing nothing OK?

Scenario

You decide not to offer mobility training as client is reported to use a walking frame.

They may still go out for short distances and need road safety advice even if they will not be a long cane user.

Type of risk

- Economic – wrong advice about benefits given and clients lose out financially (to reduce risk of this happening could refer work to other agencies)
- Physical – client cutting themselves with knife as not taught correct technique for chopping vegetables (reduce risk by teaching safety in kitchen)
- Psychological – if client has to wait too long for intervention their mental health could be affected (reduce risk by assessing clients for priority if there is a waiting list)

Consequences of getting it wrong

- Internal complaint
- Ombudsman investigation
- Complaint/investigation by RWPN
- Get sued for negligence

Internal complaint

Likely outcomes:

Client gets apology

Client gets compensation

You get noticed (not in a good way)

Ombudsman investigation (local government & social care)

Can investigate individual complaints about councils

Cumbria – UPHELD. Leaflets were sent in format clients could not read, even though they had already told council. Some departments were not on same database so did not receive format request. £100 compensation. Told to sort out record keeping.

Islington – UPHELD. Delayed referral to sensory team in 2020. No Care Act assessment made. Apology to client. £350 compensation. Told to do assessment without delay. New system of ordering so **clients** did not have to chase up equipment.

Other cases

Hammersmith & Fulham – UPHELD. Unreasonable delay in being assessed for sensory needs. Apology to client. £500 compensation for distress. £2,000 back payment re missed care support package. £950 for sensory delay. Told to review services to include ROVI capacity. Told to provide appropriate supervision. Told to make pathway for sensory referrals.

Staffordshire – UPHELD. Told a reassessment under Care Act is needed to include wellbeing of client in her family roles. L/A must address all identified needs in care package. (inc. kitchen skills and role in taking kids to school).

Complaint to RWPN

- From Jan 2022 RWPN can investigate concerns about ROVIs
- All members agree to follow the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and comply with Continuing Professional Development requirements
- Possible consequences if complaint upheld
 - verbal or written apology
 - written warning
 - further training requirement
 - caution on register for 5 years
 - conditions of practice order (training/supervision/restricted practice)
 - suspension for up to 12 months
 - removal from register (can reapply after 3 years)
- [Rehabilitation Workers Professional Network RWPN - Concerns and Complaints](#) – link for more info

Sued for negligence

- Cases? Can find none in UK (nor in America)
- Your organisation could be sued if the actions or omissions that breached a duty of care led to a loss for the client and it was reasonably foreseeable
- Would another ROVI have done the same act, or omission, that you did?
- In a court case an expert in the profession would be asked to make that judgment
- Analogy of driving instructor
 - risk during training
 - risk if workers not qualified (no assessment process)
 - ROVI apprenticeship with independent assessor makes negligence cases more unlikely

Reduce risk by:

- Doing a good assessment – a specialist mobility assessment where you can record possible health risks, client's goals and plan for teaching
- Writing accurate case notes but proportionate – usual mobility lesson without issues just needs a few lines
- Record every contact with client within reasonable timeframe
- Keep case notes factual (not opinions – unless ROVI prof. opinion)
- Carry mobile phone for emergencies
- Show client's gradual competency through case notes
- If you are freelance – get insurance (try Policy Bee)

Reduce risk cont.

- Weigh up risk(s) and what will be achieved
- Be able to justify your decisions
- Liaise with other involved workers
- Discuss risks with client (if they have capacity)
- If there are areas of concern, note on file (i.e. client has been advised to cross at controlled crossing)

External pressures (could increase risk)

- Too much workload per ROVI
- Delay in seeing clients
- Training not being available to upskill ROVI
- Being asked to do tasks outside your professional remit (i.e. social care)
- Unskilled or unqualified workers not being supported or doing tasks that should be done by a qualified ROVI

What do **you** need to do?

- Take something from today that you are going to back to your workplace and do to reduce risk

E.g.

- Write a specialist mobility assessment
- Make links with other ROVIs if you work alone
- Make a case for specialist supervision
- Find training and ask to attend