

# Covid19-The Wakeup Call:

## Futureproofing your Dance Business

Learning lessons should be something that dance teachers excel at. After all they teach for a living and provide everyone in their care with endless hours of technique, guidance and psychosocial support. However, certain elements which are close to home are often overlooked in a business which prides itself on being high on quality, fun and excitement.

The very nature of the human psyche goes against preparing for the future, sharing good practice and ensuring the safety of ourselves and others. This can be proved by asking yourself a simple question, ***how much time have you spent in the last six months reviewing and updating your safety documentation?*** I suspect most answers will be little or no time at all.

As we now start to think about the possibility of re-opening our doors, we find ourselves faced with the task of completing a Covid-19 risk assessment. But it doesn't stop there, our doors have been closed for some considerable time, there are many other things we need to consider before we can be assured we are ready to allow employees and patrons back into the dance studio. Are all our statutory inspections still valid and in date, the mains electric, electrical equipment, gas safety, water hygiene, fire safety equipment to name a few.

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Additionally, Covid-19 is not likely to be a one off, it's not going to go away in the short to mid-term and is very likely to return in the winter, along with the usual seasonal colds and flu. Unless we have the foresight to plan ahead, and take heed of current learnings, then we are going to be ill prepared for other similar occurrences.

For the past five years MOM has sent out information, written articles and supported the IDTA and its teachers in preparing for the worst and hoping for the best. The biggest challenge is that people think only in the short term and often focus on the quick easy win's that sit within their comfort zones and field of knowledge. Let's face it you didn't become a dance instructor or school proprietor to write risk assessments!



But the reality is, hundreds of dance schools have already closed and hundreds more are wondering how they will survive. Staying safe is critical to good business, but we fail to recognise and embrace the value it adds to our business and survival. Worse still, we tend not to learn from previous experiences and mistakes. The fundamental health and safety steps are vitally important and need to be applied. There is a vast difference between being risk aware and risk adverse and burying your head in the sand is not a robust mechanism for learning and evolving your risk management systems.

### Safety First

#### Policies and procedures

You need to set out your safety policy, your statement of intent, signed by the most senior person within the organisation which outlines how you plan to manage safety. Following on from which you need to develop policies and procedures for your normal day to day activities which must also reference your duty of care to all stakeholders that you interact with.

Every school must have a set of policies, procedures and other supporting documentation establishing the most important practices undertaken in the space where you are teaching. There are many examples of such documents including but not exclusive to your health and safety policy, risk assessments, fire risk assessments, dress code, staff codes of practice, safeguarding policy, terms and conditions, constitution, checklists for examinations / classes / events / competitions etc.

#### Risk assessment

The risk assessment is not only a legal requirement, it is crucial to providing a mechanism through which you can ensure that for each practice undertaken, you as the principal teacher of the school are providing measures for eliminating or managing those risks and enabling a safe environment for your teachers to teach in and the public to be admitted to.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provide specific advice on risk assessment on the HSE website ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)). There are many ways and methods of producing a risk assessment and we've used a simple example to illustrate once such method.

The principle of risk assessment is based on five steps:

1. Identify the hazard
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risk and decide on precautions
4. Record your significant findings
5. Review your assessment and update as required.

**Step 1 & 2** - identifies what the hazard is, who might be harmed and how frequently they may be exposed to the hazard

| Description of the Hazard   |   |
|---|---|
| Persons slipping, tripping or falling whilst entering or leaving the dance school, whilst moving around once inside or whilst participating in classes. |   |
| Persons Affected  | Employees, clients & students, visitors, public and contractors                       |
| Frequency of Exposure   | During the operational hours of the dance studio, whilst persons are on the premises. |

**Step 2 continued** – expands on the nature of the hazard and also provides an indication of how they may be harmed as a consequence of interaction with the hazard.

| Hazards and Effects   |
|---|
| Obstacles in entry and exit points (doors) or main circulation routes (corridors) due to stored items and boxes, trailing cables, waste or similar resulting in a person tripping and falling with the potential for injury including, sprains, strains, bruising, fractures or concussion. |
| Uneven or damaged flooring, surfaces or changes in level resulting in a person tripping and falling with the potential for injury including, sprains, strains, bruising, fractures or concussion  |
| Spillages or excess fluids on the floor resulting in a person slipping with the potential for injury including, sprains, strains, bruising, fractures or concussion   |

**Step 3** – Decide on the precautions (control measures) you are going to put in place to minimise the risk

| Control Measures   |
|--|
| ✓ Daily area safety checks completed before opening to the public.   |
| ✓ All areas to be kept clean and tidy  |
| ✓ Entrances, exits and circulation routes to be kept clear of obstructions.  |
| ✓ Hazards should be appropriately highlighted, usually by means of a physical barrier or hazard tape to warn others of the risks until it can be removed / cleaned up / suitably repaired or replaced. |
| ✓ Any significantly uneven surfaces and any damaged surfaces or spillages must be reported to the proprietor immediately.  |
| ✓ All chemical spillages must be reported immediately and cleaned up safely considering the nature of the substance (refer to the safety data sheet for all chemicals).                                |
| ✓ Access to non-public areas should be restricted.   |

**Step 3 continued** – Evaluate the risk, this can be done in a number of ways, some people work with high, medium and low, others prefer a numerical system and some, as we've shown below, a combination of the two systems.

You need to consider, what is the likelihood of an adverse hazardous event occurring?

| Likelihood            |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>1: Unlikely</b>    | It would be a surprise if it happened                      |
| <b>2: Possible</b>    | Even with controls it could happen if not actively managed |
| <b>3: Very Likely</b> | No one would be surprised if this happened                 |

If it did happen, what is the consequence or the severity of the injury likely to be?

| Consequence / Severity |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>1: Minor</b>        | It would be a surprise if it happened                      |
| <b>2: Moderate</b>     | Even with controls it could happen if not actively managed |
| <b>3: Major</b>        | No one would be surprised if this happened                 |

We then need to determine what the risk is, this is achieved by multiplying the likelihood by consequence to give a risk rating.

| x          | Consequence |   |   |
|------------|-------------|---|---|
| Likelihood | 3           | 6 | 9 |
|            | 2           | 4 | 6 |
|            | 1           | 2 | 3 |

This risk rating then informs the level of risk and what else we may need to do.

| Risk Rating  |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1 – 2 Low    | Monitor and review                           |
| 3 – 4 Medium | Implement additional controls where possible |
| 6 - High     | Manage with strict controls                  |
| 9 - Extreme  | Stop the activity                            |

**Step 4** – requires you to record your assessment, above is just one way of achieving step 4, but you can use any template that captures the risk assessment process as shown above. More information on risk assessment is available on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website [www.hse.gov.uk/risk](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk)

**Step 5** – Monitor the effectiveness of your risk assessment and the controls used to manage risk. A full review of the assessment should be made annually or should further information be received which suggests that the documented control measures are found to be unsuitable, insufficient, ineffective, where there is a significant change in working practices or an incident occurs

### Other considerations.

Below are eight key considerations for being business ready and ensuring that your key obligations for health and safety are being met.

## Work Ready Tips 1

01

Are you following Government & HSE Guidelines  
IDTA Directives?  
Statutory duties?

02

Are you and your staff in a safe physical and psychological environment?

03

Have you the correct insurance in place?

04

Update your protocols and policies every year or when something significant changes?

## Work Ready Tips 2

05

Work closely with your venue manager to ensure that the venue is safe for all attending.

06

Update your risk assessments regularly to ensure the safety of all staff, and public.

07

Ensure that you have risk assessments and protocols for a range of pandemic possibilities.

08

Test all protocols and procedures before agreeing that they are ready for operation.

1. It is essential that you are following Government and HSE guidelines, as well as your industry best practice and directives from your Association.
2. Secondly, all staff and other stakeholders must be provided with a safe environment.
3. You should ensure that you have adequate insurances to cover you, your staff and your venue, for those planned activities and undertaking you engage in. Keep your insurance company informed of your situation at all times and keep on file a copy of your live risk assessment whatever the challenge occurring.
4. Your policies and protocols must be in place and regularly reviewed, at least annually or more frequently if they are found to be insufficient or an incident occurs.
5. Whether you have your own studio or are working in a private or public venue you should work

closely with the venue manager to ensure that all of the legislation and guidance is being upheld to the highest standard.

6. Your risk assessments must be in place for each activity.
7. You must ensure that you have in place a robust maintenance, inspection and testing regime for things like, electrical safety, gas safety, water hygiene, fire safety etc. etc. that is aligned to statutory requirements and industry guidance and best practice. If you have been closed for a protracted period of time, these should be checked and confirmed in date before you re-open.
8. Test your procedures, check your control measures are in place, that they work and your staff know what to do in an emergency.

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*It is important that as a society, as a person and as operators of a business we learn from our mistakes, we look carefully at our risks and we plan for safety. Failure to do so not only means we may be breaking the law, or that we may get a fine or bad reputation but more importantly, someone may get hurt.*

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do so not only means we may be breaking the law, or that we may get a fine or bad reputation but more importantly, someone may get hurt.

Prosecutions occur daily, you only have to look at the HSE prosecutions database or annual statistics to see how many people are killed and injured at work each year. In our own industry sector, dance, civil claims against proprietors and scandals in the press are a reality.

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Mind Over Matter Consultancy and its partners Chris Hall from A.C.T National, Cara Donaldson and Hayley Procter provide advice and support to the dance sector and have developed a Dance Toolbox which includes sample risk assessments, policies and a risk management system. For more information, contact: [chris.kemp@momconsultancy.com](mailto:chris.kemp@momconsultancy.com) or call on 07834 140598.

Thank you for reading our article.

*Professor Chris Kemp*

*Professor Chris Kemp, CEO of Mind over Matter Consultancy is known throughout the world as an expert on crowded space and the development of risk analysis processes for venues/events. He has addressed the House of Commons Select Committee on Olympic Security for the London 2012 Olympic Games advised the Royal Society of Medicine on crush injuries and was employed by the HSE as their crowded space expert for the London Olympics. Chris has worked on major events including the Pope's visit to Romania, the European Football Championships and the Commonwealth Games. He has provided crowded space consultancy for six major London Stations as well as supporting the British Olympic coaching team for the Rio and Tokyo Games. Chris is well published and has written a series of crowded space books.*

