

# HSP 13 Falls from windows and balconies

## Procedure Index

Section	Title
1	Introduction
2	The problem
3	What the Regulations require
4	Assessing the risk
5	General advice on controls
6	Types of window restrictors
7	Conditions around exceptional relaxation of individual window restrictors
8	Training
9	Maintenance
10	Associated documents
11	A summary of the main points
12	Document history

## Briefings

Having read this procedure all key points must be communicated to all staff that work within a care home. This must take the form of a briefing based around the RAG14 (Risk assessment on falls from windows & balconies) which should be recorded with signatures of attendee's.

If you require any further assistance in the development of the team talk please contact your Safety, Health, Environment & Quality Manager.

## 1. Introduction

Falls from windows and balconies are a serious issue for residents within care homes. These often result in serious or fatal injury and there have been many prosecutions by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) following accidents to vulnerable people.

## 2. The problem

There are 3 categories of falls:

- falls arising out of confused mental state
- accidental falls
- deliberate self – harm.

Majority of reported falls involve people in a temporary or permanent confused mental state often caused by dementia or reduced mental capacity. In some cases individuals try to escape from environment they perceive to be hostile.

Accidental falls occur where a person is sitting on a window sill, or where the sill or banister height is low (less than 0.8m) and acts as a pivot, allowing them to fall.

Deliberate self harm is a recognised risk for people with certain mental health conditions.

## 3. What the Regulations require

Where there is a risk of falling from height there is a requirement to provide devices that prevent windows opening too wide (window restrictors). Window restrictors can either be fixed (that is, cannot be overridden) or can only be overridden by means of a removable key or other device.

Note: Opening restrictors (sometimes called limiting restrictors and holding restrictors) are common features of windows. However these can be overridden and are mainly designed for domestic environments – therefore they are not suitable for the majority of care home windows.

## 4. Assessing the risk

To adequately manage the risk of falls from windows or balconies, you need to consider the risks presented by both premises and residents and document this assessment.

- It is noted that in some cases window restrictors are installed primarily as a security rather than fall from height control.
- The risk that the window is located within an area where it could be subject to determined physical abuse (residents bedrooms).
- The risk that furniture may enable residents to climb over barriers or access previously inaccessible windows should be considered.
- In accessing the risks you should consider the welfare and comfort of residents from reduced natural ventilation.

## 5. General advice on controls

**Window restrictors** – Where vulnerable residents have access to windows large enough to allow them to fall and be harmed, those windows should be restrained sufficiently to prevent such falls. Window restrictors should:

- Restrict the opening to 100mm or less.

- Be suitable robust to withstand foreseeable forces applied by an individual determined to open the window further.
- Be sufficiently robust to withstand damage (either deliberate or from general wear).
- Be secured by tamper-proof fittings so they cannot be disengaged using readily accessible tools. They should require a special tool to disengage or remove.

**Balconies** – Where assessment identifies risk of failing, sufficient protection should be provided to prevent access to balconies or climbing over using furniture (seats, pot plants etc).

**Restricting access to upper floors** – Where residents are at risk of falling, either protective measures need to be provided or ensure that residents only have access to safe areas – eg ground floor.

## 6. Types of window restrictors

There are different types of restrictors in use within the homes, although their purpose is the same to restrict the size of the opening to prevent access or egress.

<b>Risk Assessment Category</b>	<b>Locations</b>
HIGH	Resident bedrooms / bathrooms above ground floor / Common areas Windows next to seats.
MEDIUM	Areas with restricted access to residents. Staff- rooms / Laundry rooms etc
LOW	Ground Floor rooms with drops less than 1m.

## 7. Conditions around exceptional relaxation of individual window restrictors

There may be occasional circumstances where a resident or family member requests that the window restrictors are disengaged within a room so the windows can be opened wider. It is recommended that window restrictors are only disengaged in exceptional circumstances and only where access from other home residents can be prevented. Therefore it not acceptable to disengage window restrictors in common areas.

Window restrictors must only be disengaged after an assessment of the fall risk to both the resident and any other individuals in the home. This should be recorded within the following section of iCare : -

### 5.10 Environmental Risk Assessment

Enter information about relaxing window restrictors via the environmental risk assessment.

## 8. Training

Make sure everyone in the home is aware of requirement for window restrictors, when they are required and the importance of them not being defeated. Make sure that your team understand the importance of reporting any defects in windows and restrictors.

Maintenance officers completing inspections should receive training on requirements.

## 9. Maintenance

Each and every restrictor should be inspected on a regular basis and the frequency shall be decided by risk assessment.

- Performance against criteria in section 5 should be assessed.
- Where a damaged, defeated or defective restrictor is found, questions should always be asked about the significance of the finding and any wider implications, and a programme to repair or replace the restrictor put in place. The risk assessment should also be reviewed.
- Frequency of inspection may be decreased if damage or failure is never encountered – but it will always be required and will also need to be documented as part of the risk assessment process.
- Window cleaners: Window cleaners are not required to disengage window restrictors

## 10. Associated documents

- HSP 13A Window Restrictor record
- RAG 14 Falls from windows balconies
- RAG 102 Balconies

## 11. A Summary of the main points

Check that:

- A Windows falls risk assessment is produced which identifies controls required.
- Inspection frequencies are assigned to all windows with restrictors.
- Maintenance inspections are completed to defined frequencies.
- Any individual relaxations are documented on risk assessment and authorised by General Manager.
- Defects are reported immediately and rectified

## 12. Document history

Author	Steve Andrews (Health & Safety Manager)
Date of Implementation	01/08/2015
Date of next full review	01/01/2027

Issue	Date	Author	Reason
1.0	01/08/2015	Steve Andrews	New document.
2.0	10/01/2018	Steve Andrews	Full document review – no changes
3.0	04/01/2019	Steve Andrews	Added Section 7 – arrangements for relaxation of window restrictors.

4.0	13/01/2021	Steve Andrews	Full document review – no changes
5.0	26/01/2024	Steve Andrews	Full document review – updated section 7 - recording location to iCare environmental risk assessment. added new section Associated documents.
5.0	24/02/2024	Steve Andrews	Banner updated, no other changes, issue number kept same.