

## Supporting individuals, teams and organisations

### Tool: Risk influences

**The aim of this tool is to identify how common concerns about risk are affecting your decisions**

Research points to factors which influence our perceptions, beliefs and decisions about risk. You can use this tool to identify how these affect your thinking about a particular decision. Ask each question in turn and note how this is influencing you. Then think about how you can overcome the influence.

#### Background

Evidence shows that people don't think rationally about risk. Instead, we are affected by a range of influences that impact on how we perceive risk and how risky we think things are.

It is important for practitioners to understand these influences so that you can reflect on what might be affecting how risky or safe you think a situation is.

#### Risk influences

Risk influences, also called heuristics, are particular ways of thinking about risk that stop us from being objective and rationally weighing up the likelihood of risk and its consequences.

Some of the main influences are set out below (Taylor 2010).

**Repetition bias: Believing what we have been told most often and by most sources.**  
Where have I heard about this kind of situation before?

**Adjustment bias: Selectively processing information to support judgements that have already been made.**  
Have I already made up my mind about this situation?

**Wariness of lurking conflict: Anxiety that a decision may impact negatively on working relationships or lead to complaints, criticism or assault.**  
Am I worried I might upset someone in this situation?

**Credibility bias: being more likely to accept a statement from someone we like, or less likely to believe people, groups or organisations we have a bias against.**  
What is my relationship with the person/people who told me about this situation?

**Availability/recall bias: Overestimating the likelihood of events familiar to us, or events excessively reported by the media.**  
Does this situation seem familiar?

**Prejudice: Bias from conscious or unconscious stereotyping.**  
How do my values and beliefs affect my view of this situation?