

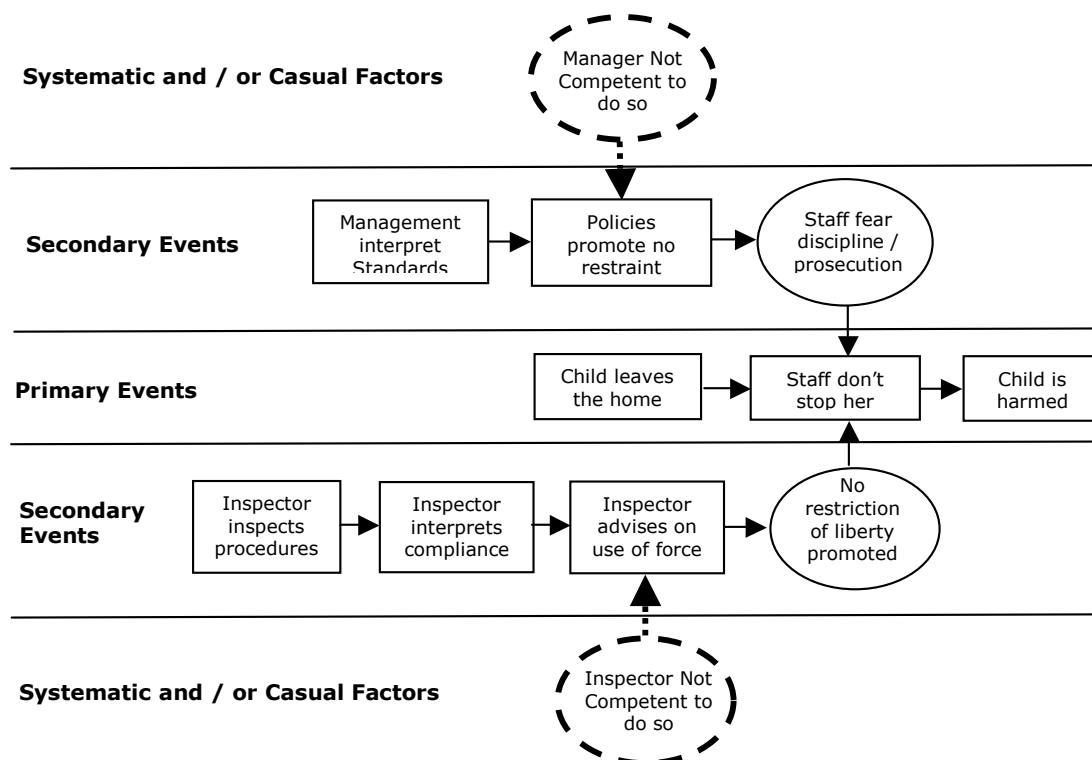
Effects and Casual Factors Analysis

In Decembers newsletter we mentioned, in the article '*BILD Accreditation - Nationally Recognised Standard - or not?*' that we have carried out a number of ECFA (Effects and Casual Factors Analysis') and as a result have specifically identified that CSCI and HSE inspectors, as well as many managers responsible for implementing training, can, and have been, a casual or systematic factor in increasing risk, and therefore the resultant harm to those whom they are mandated to protect. This is because some inspectors and managers are actually giving incompetent advice to agencies on what systems or intervention, or indeed even what specific techniques may and may not be used, when they are not competent to do so.

Therefore, I thought it would be worthwhile writing a few lines to explain more clearly what an ECFA is and also how it can be used in ascertaining systematic and casual factors associated with risk.

An ECFA [Effects and Casual Factors Analysis] is a method of collecting data from accident and incident investigations which is normally output as a chart to illustrate the events and casual factors that would have been involved in an incident and how these interrelate.

A simple ECFA Chart can be seen in the following example which involves a number of events and factors that have led up to a child being harmed.



Primary Events

In this example the **Primary Events** leading up the harm are as follows:

- Children continuously attempt to leave the home and abscond, placing themselves at risk of abuse / significant harm;
- Staff don't stop the child leaving;
- The child is harmed.

These are shown as a linear event in the row marked '**Primary Events**'.

Secondary Events

Other relevant events, known as '**Secondary Events**' are recorded above and below the row of 'Primary Events'. (They can be as many rows as possible but for this example only 2 rows have been shown to simplify the example.)

In the top row of '**Secondary Events**' we can see that:

- The management have interpreted the Care Home Standards to mean that they are not allowed to restrict a child's liberty should they attempt to abscond.
- As such they have produced 'no restraint' policies to ensure that staff do not stop children leaving the home, as this would constitute, based on their subjective interpretation, be a breach of the Care Home Standards.
- This leads to staff fearing discipline or prosecution if they do attempt to stop a child leaving.
- As a result, children are not prevented from leaving the home, even if there is a risk of harm as staff and management have the fear of discipline and prosecution at the forefront of their minds as opposed to the best interests of the child.

In the bottom row of '**Secondary Events**' we can see that:

- Inspectors inspect the home to ensure compliance with the standards as is part of their professional remit.
- The Inspector interprets the homes policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Care Home Standards.
- Is satisfied that the 'no restraint policy' implemented by the home is consistent with the Care Home Standards (in fact the policy itself was implemented as a result of an inspectors advice and guidance on Standard compliance).
- Advises that staff should not use physical force to prevent a child leaving the home or even bolt a door temporarily as this would be an unlawful restriction of a child's liberty.

Systematic and Casual Factors

Systematic and Casual factors are referred to in ECFA as 'conditions' and are normally recorded above and below the relevant primary and secondary sequence of events. These are normally contained in 'oval shaped' boxes and connected by dotted lines / arrows.

It is normally usual to differentiate between 'systematic' and 'casual' contributory factors as follows.

Systematic Factors

Systematic is when the 'system' used is at fault resulting in reduced safety overall. For example, there is no formal safe system of working or safe working practices in place, risk assessments have not been undertaken for hazardous activities and staff are generally left to their own 'common sense' to 'get on with it' as part of the job.

Casual Factors

A 'casual' factor is when failings take place due, in this case for example, advice been given on the use of physical force by someone not competent in their knowledge base in that area. This can be due to systematic failings where people in certain 'positions' are expected to advise without proper competent guidance or training, or where the person has decided to act outside of the scope of their employed role by advising on issues that they are not competent in but think that they know best.

In the above example, which is based on an actual incident investigation where two care home staff were suspended for using force to prevent a child running into a busy road to try and commit suicide, we found, by asking some very simple questions, that the managers and the inspectors competence in the specific area in the use of physical force was subjective and not based on any competent understanding of the law, or indeed, the wider guidance available in there professional area of work.

I have simplified the process somewhat to give you hopefully a clearer understanding. There are also other H&S Models for investigation that we use, such as HSG65 and HSG48 for systematic and human factors which are worth knowing about.

A point of fact is that some individuals involved in the regulation and monitoring of care agencies for example, do not get training on the broader legal perspective, or the physiological and psychological aspects with regard to the training and occupational use of physical force. As such they need to be mindful that they may be giving polarised advice, based only on their interpretation of the Care Home Standards, which can lead to a liability for themselves and / or their departments.

Where the former would be regarded as a 'casual factor' the latter would be a 'systematic failing' in the inability to ensure that such individuals get competent training – not just training, but competent training.



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For example, did you know that minimum force is not a legal requirement? Therefore, if someone is giving advice that only 'minimum force can be used they are giving incompetent advice that could increase risk. There is another example of a 'casual' or 'systematic' failing? If not read the November 2006 article: *Minimum Force - Myth or reality?*

Reference: *Health and safety: risk management – Dr. Tony Boyle – IOSH Publications*