Risk assessments in food production

Before you start production a risk assessment of safety and occupational hazards should be carried out to assess any hazardous or potentially dangerous activities (as may affect staff and third parties visiting premises) that could pose a risk to health or cause injury to others. When any hazards are identified, you should work out how to reduce the risks or eliminate them entirely from your production process or workspace.

The health and safety executive give the five steps to risk assessment as:
Step 1: Identify the significant hazards relevant to the business.
Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how (not just your employees, but others that may be affected by your work activities).
Step 3: Evaluate the risks, consider existing control measures and decide on additional precautions
Step 4: Record your findings and implement them.
Step 5: Review your risk assessment and update if necessary.

Risk assessments are required to be recorded where five or more staff are employed. Risk assessments do not have to be perfect documents as the requirements state that risk assessments must be 'suitable and sufficient'. Further detailed information on each of these points and how to address them can be found in the links below.

Do not confuse these risk assessments relating to health and safety of personnel, with those required in relation to food safety, which will be controlled by Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) or bespoke HACCP Plans.

Be sure to create your own risk assessments and not copy others or use standard risk assessments. Your risk assessment should be a 'living document' and tailored to your own operations and updated at least annually or whenever there is a change, or a new risk is identified. They will always need to be reviewed in response to incidents and review at regular frequencies is deemed to be best practice.

Risk assessments and Covid-19
Covid-19 is still having an impact on workplaces with high numbers of absences due to staff illness and is scoped within health and safety requirements for businesses. As a result, you should consider including Covid-19 precautions such as social distancing, mask use at service time and extra cleaning measure to protect your team. This will also be useful in case of future pandemic events that evolve quickly.

Links
https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/foodprep.pdf
https://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/campaigns-fundraising/hse-five-steps-to-risk-assessment.pdf
https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm
https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/foodprep.pdf