

Appendix 4: Completing a risk assessment

A risk assessment is a useful way of thinking through the risks and potential problems that may occur in any activity. It helps you to come up with solutions, it shows that you have planned carefully and helps you to take the reasonable steps necessary to keep everyone safe and also to protect the reputation of the organisation. It is also a good way to share important information with other members of the team to ensure that everybody is following the best practice possible to operate in a safe and accountable manner.

Use a risk assessment form as a checklist to help you to think through possible risks, problems and solutions. This step by step guide is based on Form 10 in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook. There are many different formats for risk assessment forms that you could use. Please contact the panel office if you would like help, advice or for alternative formats.

A step by step guide

Step 1 – Describe the activity, event or location to be assessed.

Risk assessments are not only about buildings. Have you done a risk assessment on activities like a luncheon club for vulnerable adults or a children's club trip or homework club? In fact, a risk assessment is a good way to carefully think through many of your church activities.

Step 2 – What are the risks associated with the activity or location?

'Risk' is the chance, high or low, that someone will be harmed by some kind of activity event or hazard. Think about activities which take place at your premises and which groups use them (e.g., youth club, toddler group). The risks may be different for different groups of people. A 'Hazard' is anything that can cause harm (e.g., slipping/tripping hazards, cables, flooring) Check them by walking around the building and look for hazards that could cause serious harm or affect a number of people. But do remember it's not all about fixtures and fittings.

Looking at the examples in Step 1 above, the risk could be something such as: a Vulnerable adult having an allergic reaction to food or drink during the luncheon club; a child going missing during the trip; or a child accessing inappropriate online material during a homework club.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide whether it is a high low or medium risk.

How likely is it that each risk or hazard you have identified could cause harm? How severe would the consequences be? You can use this matrix to help with your assessment:

a) Assess the likelihood of incidence/injury occurring as follows:

1 = Improbable, 2 = Possible, 3 = Likely, 4 = Very Likely, 5 = certain

b) Assess the severity of the consequences as follows: 1 = Trivial (e.g. grazing, soreness), 2 = Minor (small cuts, bruising), 3 = Severe (broken bones), 4 = Major, 5 = Fatal.

Now multiply the 'likelihood of the risk' occurring with the 'severity of the consequence' and note your total. **A total of 1-4 is low risk, 5-7 is moderate and 8+ high risk**

This helps us to quantify the risk and prioritise the action that needs to be taken.

Step 4 - Who is at Risk?

Children, vulnerable adults, members of staff, members of the public etc.

Step 5 – Note down the measures that you are putting in place to control the risk.

Control measures could include things like ensuring enough trained staff to supervise children, having a trained first aider, it could be ensuring that there is a completed consent form for each child giving medical and photograph consent or it could be taping down a loose cable.

Back to the examples. How could you reduce the risk of the problems noted in **Step 2** occurring?

- a) *The lunch club members – a control measure could be to use a simple form to ask if they have any allergies so that you can avoid anything that would pose a danger.*
- b) *The children’s club trip – a control measure would be to ensure that there a sufficient ratio of volunteers to children to ensure adequate supervision.*
- c) *The homework club – control measures would be ensuring there are controls on internet access and sites that can be visited and providing some safe internet use education.*

Note any control measures and solutions down and ensure that you put them place. Make this document an action plan not just a paper exercise.

Step 6 - Are the control measures adequate?

Do you need any further measures or actions to reduce the risk to an acceptable level or are there further actions needed to put the measures into practice?

NOW sign and date your assessment and share it with all relevant parties

Step 7 - Review your assessment and revise it when necessary.

It is good practice to review your assessment from time to time (at least annually) to ensure that precautions are still working effectively. Set a date for review and keep to it – at the very least this should be annually. Remember if you bring in new equipment or change the way you work then you will need to go through the procedure again, identifying hazards, assessing risk and taking action. Add any of these findings to your original record and it will ensure that it stays up to date.

Employers, employees, volunteers and others

www.hse.gov.uk

Where an organisation, including charitable or voluntary groups, has at least one employee who works under a contract of employment, it is considered to be an employer for the purposes of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the regulations made under it.

Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a “duty of every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety.”

This generally means that organisations which have both employees and volunteers have a statutory responsibility not to harm or damage the health of volunteers through their involvement in the activities of that organisation.

The Health and Safety Executive operates throughout the UK. For more information about health and safety visit their website.