

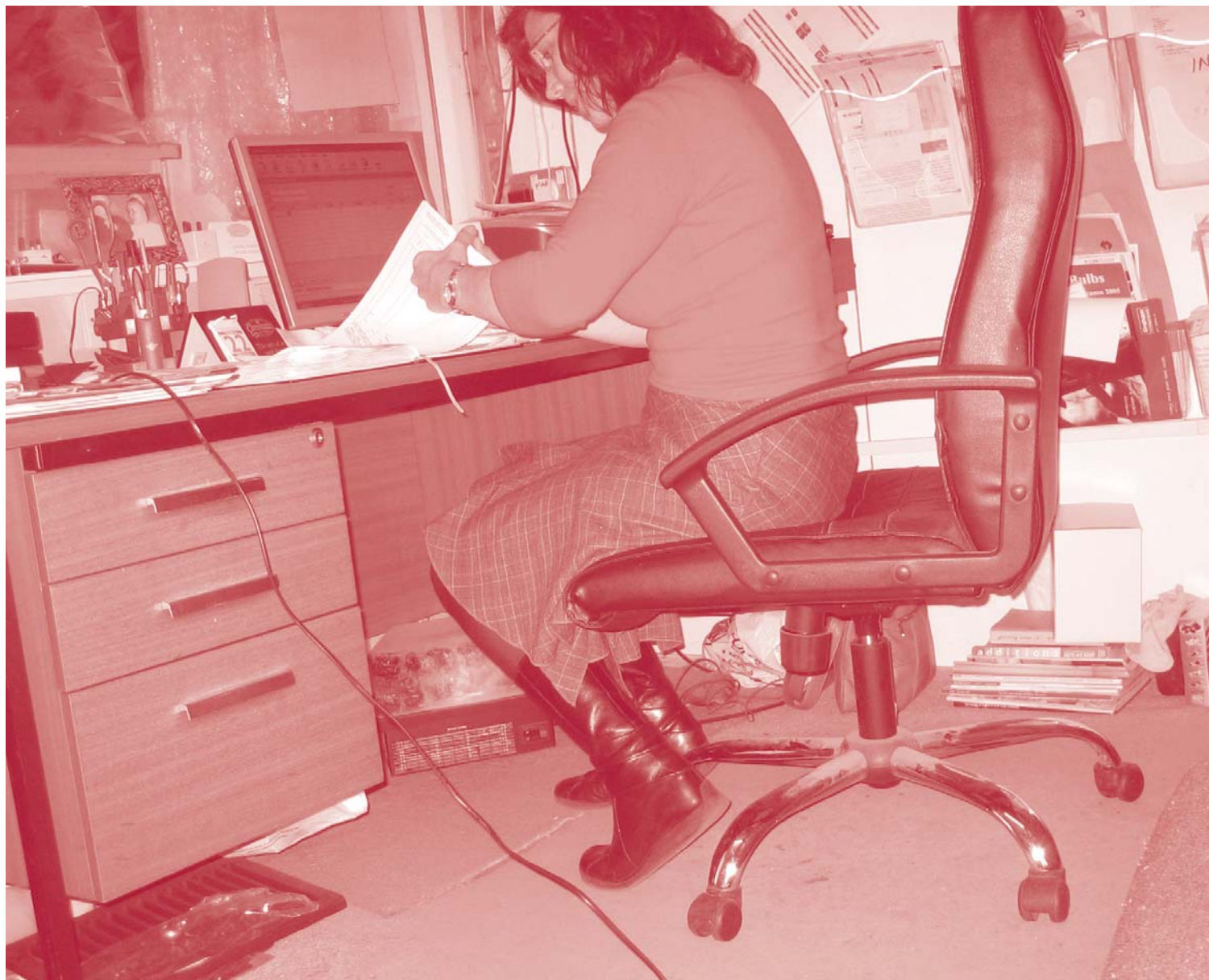


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**Action in
rural Sussex**



Children and Young People's Team

How to conduct a risk assessment

A step-by-step guide for community groups

July 2006

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Introduction

Who is this publication for?

This guide is for people in small community organisations who want to look at the risks (things that might cause problems or go wrong) within the organisation, or within the projects that they want to run.

Perhaps you want to start a new project – you'll want to consider everything that might go wrong, before you start. Or maybe you just want to look at what you are doing now, and make sure you have good measures in place.

What is a risk assessment?

All groups face some level of risk and you have a legal duty to weigh up the risks and try to reduce any harm that could be caused.

A Risk Assessment is a way of looking at your group's activities to ensure that you are being careful to cut down risks. This makes things safer for your group, and also the people who participate in your activities.

You can look at all areas of risk, for example:

- **financial:** is your money safe?
- **the way the organisation is governed:** do you have rules (or a constitution) or policies which keep the group safe?
- **operational:** are your projects and activities run in a safe way?
- **reputation:** are you behaving in a responsible and sensible way?

This 9-step guide explains how to identify risks and put things in place to keep risks low.

What is a hazard?

A hazard is anything that can cause **harm**: it could be an obstacle, electricity, equipment, or chemicals; it could be a person behaving in a dangerous way.

What is 'risk'?

The **risk** is the chance that someone will be harmed by a hazard.

'Risk Assessment' is the process of looking at the hazard and the risk, then deciding what to do to minimise the danger.

The important thing you have to do is consider a) whether the hazard is significant and b) whether you have taken enough steps to reduce the harm that could be done.

Checklist for your Risk Assessment



Step 1	Identify your group – state the name, aims and activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 2	Recognise the potential areas of risk (things that could go wrong)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 3	Identify hazards (things that could cause harm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 4	Consider who might be harmed and how	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Step 6	Give each hazard a Risk Assessment rating	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 7	Take steps to reduce the risks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 8	Make a written record	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 9	Review your assessment at set periods – revise where necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 1 Identify the name of your group and its purpose

A Risk Assessment will be unique to your group. You should take ownership of it by stating the name and purpose or function of your group. (This can be taken from your group's constitution or set of rules.) This will also help you focus on the types of risks you may come across.

Step 2 Potential areas of risk

Organisational Risk

People often think Risk Assessment is to do with 'physical risk'. However it is also important to look at 'organisational risk' within a group and the projects that the group is running or planning.

For this you should look at each aspect of your organisation (or the project(s) that you are running/planning) and identify the possible areas of risk within them.

For instance, you may wish to look at your **management structure** first:

- Is your group well organised enough to conduct the project? Does everyone know who they can go to with a problem? Is everyone clear about how to communicate?
- Does your constitution allow your group to develop in this way?
- Does your Management Committee have enough skills and knowledge to carry out the project?

You may then want to look at whether there are **operational** risks:

- Do you have the time and ability to deliver the project?
- Will you need to employ staff? What risks might there be with this? – One risk could be a lack of knowledge regarding your legal responsibilities e.g.:
 - Employment Law
 - Health and Safety
 - Equal Opportunities
 - Child protection

There may also be **financial** risks that you need to consider:

- Do you have financial guidelines in place to prevent fraud and theft?
- Do you have a clear budget so you know how much money is needed?
- Has funding been confirmed?
Are there any restrictions on how and when this money must be spent?
- Do you have enough reserves available?
Will you be able to get the money you need at the right time?

Example:

A youth group wanting to go on a summer camping expedition may consider:

- What level of knowledge is needed to plan this and carry it out? – Is this available?
- How many 'person hours' will this take? – Does the group have enough time or are more people needed?
- How much will it cost and where might funding come from? – Is there someone who knows about finding grants?
- Good financial/budgetary controls are necessary – who has these skills?
- Child protection and health and safety controls are required. Is there enough knowledge about these things? If not, are there enough resources (time/money) to develop them?

Identify Physical Risks

When you have considered your organisational risks you can move on to look at the physical aspects of your project e.g.

- Venue - where is it going to be held/run?
- What are the key risk factors with the venue, e.g.:
 - Is it easy to get in and out?
 - Is the fire exit clear?
 - Is the floor flat and level?
 - Are there good toilet facilities?
 - Is the place big enough?

You can then go on to look at what you will use the venue for and think about any **hazards** related to that. For instance, if it is an event involving young children you may wish to consider:

- External doors (children could run out)
- Heaters (they could burn someone)
- Hot drinks (these can be spilled and cause harm)
- Fire exits (you need to see them clearly and know how to use them)
- Child protection

Or for an outside event you might think about:

- Access to the site (for cars and for pedestrians)
- PA systems which might have trailing leads
- People with stalls, displays or equipment which might cause harm
- Crowd control

For a community lunch club some considerations may be:

- Serving of hot of food/drinks
- Walkways between rooms and between tables
- Kitchen facilities
- Food allergies
- Food hygiene

A youth club considering moving their session to an out door space may need to consider:

- Undesirable objects in the area
- Travel arrangements
- Young people leaving the area of the activity – will they be safe?
- Child protection

Step 3

Identifying hazards

Look around the venue /site and think about things that might cause harm.

You could discuss the activity with people who will be involved and let them tell you what the hazards might be.

You could watch a similar activity being carried out, and look at what some of the hazards seem to be.

In identifying the hazards, concentrate on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people.

You could use the following examples as a guide:

- Slipping/tripping hazards
- Fire
- Chemicals (COSHH – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health - regulations would also apply here)
- Vehicles
- Electricity (e.g. poor wiring)
- Dust (e.g. from grinding activities)
- Fumes
- Heavy things that need to be lifted or moved
- Noise
- Low/high temperature
- Lighting
- Moving parts of machinery

Step 4

Consider who might be harmed and how

Once you have identified the risks you can now assess **who** might be harmed and **how**.

Think about all the people who will work within the project.

You do not need to name the individual people, just think about groups of people who may be affected, for example:

- Members of staff
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- People sharing your space/venue
- Members of the public
- Cleaners

Pay particular attention to

- Young people and vulnerable adults
- People with physical and/or learning disabilities
- Visitors
- Inexperienced staff or volunteers
- Lone workers

These are groups of people that may be more in danger from risks and hazards.

As a result, for example you may identify:

Hazard:

Trailing lead in a hall

Who might be harmed:

Staff member and/or member of the public

How they might be harmed:

By tripping

Step 5

Evaluate the hazards and assess the risks

Once a hazard has been identified, you need to assess the risk – this means to measure how serious the risk is.

How likely is it that each hazard you have identified could actually cause harm? If it does cause harm, how severe is the harm likely to be?

Go through your list of hazards and give them scores, as follows:

Score A:

How likely is it that this hazard will happen?

1 to 5

- It is likely to happen, often and to be expected (common) 5
- It is likely to occur several times (frequent) 4
- Occasional 3
- It is unlikely but possible 2
- It is improbable (very unlikely) 1

Score B:

How severe will the harm be if it happens?

1 to 5

- Could somebody die? 5
- Could it cause a major injury to more than one person? 4
- Major injury to one person or permanent disability? 3
- Could it result in a minor injury? 2
- Could it result in loss or damage to property etc? 1

Step 6

Give each hazard a Risk Assessment Rating

The most effective way of assessing risk is to carry out a simple exercise using the scores you gave each of the hazards in Step 5.

a) Begin with Score A, the number for **How likely is the hazard to happen?**

b) Multiply this by Score B, the number for **How severe will the harm be?**

c) The figure you end up with is the 'Risk Assessment rating'.

For example:

Tripping on a cable

Score A:

How likely is it that people will trip on it if it's trailing?

Likely to happen, often and to be expected: **5**

Score B:

How severe is the harm likely to be?

Minor injuries: **2** or Major injury to one person: **3**

If we take Score B to be **3** then the total 'Risk Assessment value' is: **5 x 3 = 15**.

Acceptable levels of Risk

As a group you will need to decide what Risk Assessment level you think is an **acceptable risk**. You'll then need to put measures in place to reduce any risks over that level. Good practice would normally recommend:

0–5 low risk level, acceptable

6–9 medium risk level, measures to be taken to reduce risk

10–20 high risk level, action must be taken immediately to reduce risk

Step 7

Take steps to reduce the risks

You have identified your hazards and weighed up the risks that they pose. You now need to try to reduce the risks. Give priority to those which are highest and ask yourself:

- Can you get rid of the risk altogether (as with a trailing cable)?
- If not, how can the risk be controlled so that harm is unlikely?

Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains. You need to aim to make all risks small by either getting rid of the hazard or controlling the risk so that harm is unlikely. For example:

- Try a less risky option
- Prevent people getting close to the hazard (e.g. by putting up a guard or a fence)
- Organise people to look after an area of risk and keep others safe from it
- Provide guidelines for staff, volunteers and members of the public to follow. If needed, provide protective equipment or clothing.

Example

Hazard identified:

Trailing cable

Level of risk:

High

Control measures:

Tape cable to the floor or move the equipment somewhere else.

New level of risk now low and acceptable.

Step 8

Make a written record

For a Risk Assessment to be complete you need to write down what you have found, and the steps that you have taken to reduce the risks.

It is important that these documents are kept, as you may need to show them if there is an accident or someone makes a claim against your group.

You will need to be able to show that:

- An accurate check was made
- You considered who might be affected
- You identified the obvious hazards
- You took reasonable precautions and the remaining risks were low

Step 9

Review your assessment

Risk Assessment isn't just setting out systems and procedures. The process needs to ensure that new risks are addressed as they arise. Also, your risk assessment needs to be reviewed regularly because some risks may change as time passes.

A Risk Assessment is not a one-off event, but something that should be done at regular intervals - at least once every year unless something happens which means you need to review it earlier, for instance:

- If there has been an accident
- If circumstances change

Remember

- All groups face some level of risk
- Keep your records
- Review yearly
- Risk assessment is a legal requirement
- 'It's all common sense' is not an excuse for avoiding doing a proper Risk Assessment.

Further information

An introduction to health and safety: Health and safety in small businesses Leaflet INDG259 (rev 1)
HSE Books 2003 (single copy free)

Essentials of health and safety at work HSE Books
1994 ISBN 0 7176 0716 X

Successful health and safety management HSG65
(second edition) HSE Books 1997
ISBN 0 717 6 1276 7

Whose risks is it anyway? Hazard and risk assessment
in a small firm Video HSE Books 1992
ISBN 0 7176 1942 7

Five steps to risk assessment: Case studies HSG1 83
HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1580 4

COSHH – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health
www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/

Acknowledgments

Action in rural Sussex

Samantha Self
Barbara Beaton

HSE – Five Steps to Risk Assessment

www.hse.gov.uk

Charity Commission website

www.charity-commission.gov.uk/investigations/charrisk.asp#

Disclaimer

This guide has been written as an aid for small community groups to identify and assess the risks within their own organisation.

The information contained within it is general, and Action in rural Sussex accepts no legal responsibility for actions, which may be followed as a result of consulting this guide.

Appendix – risk

Risk assessment for: EXAMPLE YOUTH CLUB

Score A:

How likely is it that this hazard will happen?

- 1 = Improbable, very unlikely
- 2 = Unlikely but possible
- 3 = Occasional
- 4 = Occur several times; frequent
- 5 = Likely to happen, often and to be expected; common

Score B:

How severe will the harm be if it happens?

- 1 = Loss or damage to property
- 2 = could result in a minor injury
- 3 = Major injury to one person or permanent disability
- 4 = Major injury to more than one person
- 5 = Fatal; someone could die

Level of risk

0–5 Acceptable Risk

6–9 Medium Level Risk, measures to be taken to reduce risk

10–25 High Risk Level, action to be taken immediately to reduce risk

Date of Assessment:

Assessed By:

Review Date:

Description of activity	Identified risk	Level of risk	Control measures	New level of risk
Youth club session in local park	Undesirable objects on ground	Score A (3) x Score B (3) = 9	Sweep area to remove objects prior to session beginning	Score A (2) x Score B (2) = 4
	Young people leaving the area	Score A (4) x Score B (3) = 12	Set ground rules Adequate supervision	Score A (2) x Score B (2) = 4

Action in rural Sussex



About Action in rural Sussex

Action in rural Sussex (formally known as Sussex Rural Community Council) is a charity formed in 1931 to serve rural communities. Our major role is to identify problems and respond to the needs of rural communities – providing practical support and helping villages in Sussex remain vibrant living and working places. Action in rural Sussex works from a community development approach helping to support and build active and sustainable communities. Our activities are wide-ranging and include: enterprise, training, housing, transport, and community health and care support.

Action in rural Sussex is committed to working on the issues that face children and young people in the communities we serve. We do this through our core work – giving advice to local communities, development work with specific communities across the two counties and operating services that are of benefit to children and young people that live rurally. These include:

- 1 The **Your Bus Your Call Healthy Living Centre Project**, a mobile youth resource and helpline service in Lewes District.
- 1 The **East Sussex Project** – targeted projects supporting young people in rural Wealden and Rother, funded from the Transforming Youth Work Fund.

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About the Local Network Fund

The Local Network Fund provides grants of between £250 and £7,000 to locally managed voluntary, community or self-help groups to run projects or activities with disadvantaged children or young people aged 0–19 or their parents/carers.

Applications are assessed on a rolling basis. In order to receive an application form and grant guidelines, ring the national call centre:

0845 113 0161

Action in rural Sussex is the local administrator for the Local Network Fund across the whole of East Sussex, West Sussex, Brighton and Hove. If you have questions about the Local Network Fund or about your application, please call the Local Network Fund Case Officers on 01273 407306.

All projects funded by the Local Network Fund must have a constitution or set of rules written for and approved by the group.

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We would also like to acknowledge Lisa Bartlett of Bexhill and Battle Under Five Association

This guide is available electronically at www.ruralsussex.org.uk

If you would like additional print versions, or would like a copy of our other guides:

How to develop child protection policies & procedures,

How to write an equal opportunities policy,

How to write a constitution

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