

Identifying and Managing Risk

What is risk assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in the context of your activities, could cause harm to other people, so that you can identify and decide whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

Why bother?

The child protection policy states that opportunities will be provided for children to participate safely and that appropriate procedures will be implemented to safeguard their wellbeing. To do this effectively, your organisation must first be aware of the areas of risk and be able to adequately assess these risks. Thus, you will be:

- Making sure children are safe.
- Protecting your staff and volunteers.
- Making sure you comply with legislation.
- Reducing or removing liability.
- Giving your sport a good reputation.

What does the law state?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation at all times. Section 5 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 states that if you are 16 or over and have children in your care or control, then you must do what is reasonable in all circumstances to safeguard their health, welfare and development.

What does all this mean in practice?

Put simply, when children are taking part in our activities we have a responsibility to make sure they are safe from harm. We fulfil this duty by:

1. Accepting we have this duty.
2. Agreeing policies, procedures and practices which tell us what action we need to take in order to keep children safe from harm.
3. Telling all relevant persons about safe practices; for example, through training.
4. Putting them into practice.
5. Ensuring they are being followed and reviewing them.

We can't be expected to eliminate every possible risk. We don't want to wrap children in cotton wool or have so many procedures and so much paperwork that staff and volunteers are prevented from carrying out their roles, or worse, put off altogether.

A risk assessment should be a benefit to your organisation by allowing you to focus on the things which are important. By doing what is 'reasonable', you will give people

the confidence to know they are following good practice, and, therefore looking after themselves too. This guide will help you to identify what is reasonable.

Some Helpful Definitions

Hazard. Any situation or any practice which might cause harm.

Harm. Includes harm which is not physical. A child may be harmed in a number of ways; for example, emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect, intentional/inappropriate restraint, harassment or bullying, carelessness which amounts to neglect or failure to attend to essential health and safety requirements.

Risk. The chance that someone could be harmed, and an indication of how serious the harm might be.