

Information sheet: Simple guide to risk assessments

Whether you are planning a one off event such as a street party or a regular activity such as a Men's Shed, you will need to make some judgements about safety and risk. A risk assessment can help you make these judgements and assist you to do what you can to make sure people don't get hurt. Assessing risk can often seem daunting and confusing, and it is often something that people find worrying.

However, it doesn't need to be complicated or difficult. Risk is something that we assess every day without even thinking about it. Whether it is crossing the road or checking whether our coffee is too hot to drink, we automatically evaluate risk in our immediate surroundings. Assessing risk for an event or activity is no different. In fact, you are probably aware of some of the risks already. By adopting a common sense approach and following our [risk assessment template](#), you might find that it is easier than you think.



When you complete a formal risk assessment, you are thinking about the ways that someone could be harmed during an activity or an event and how you could reduce the likelihood of this happening. Writing down the potential risks will help you to decide and plan what you can do to reduce or minimise these risks. Most of the time, these are things that you will have done anyway and are common sense. For example, if you are planning a street party, you will have already thought about closing the road for the duration of the event. However, by systematically thinking about the risk it may also have uncovered some things that you may not have thought of. For example, there may be a particularly sharp or raised manhole cover in the street, which could be dangerous for young children or the elderly that had not known about.

Writing down a risk assessment down may seem unnecessary, especially if the changes are things that you would have done anyway, however, there are a couple of important reasons why it might be useful to do so. A written risk assessment helps to show that you have paid proper attention to the risk and by recording your decisions, it helps you to explain them to others. It can even save you time in the long-run, as it saves you from evaluating the same risks over and over, saving you from making the same decisions again and again. If you are working with a group of people, writing down a risk assessment can help the group take shared responsibility for the event or activity by encouraging discussion and joint planning.



If you have third party liability insurance or if an external funding body is funding your event, a written risk assessment is a vital document that you will need to have and will help you to prove that you did all you could to reduce potential harm should there be an accident. Remember though, that this only works if you actually did what you said you would do!

People are often worried that a risk assessment will stop them from doing what they want to do or they become worried about organising anything in case something goes wrong and someone is hurt. Assessing risk is not about making your activity or event risk free, but about achieving a balance between a reasonable level of risk and getting on with organising your event or activity. Rather than trying to remove risk, think about what you could change to reduce or minimise the risk. For example, if you wanted to hold a bonfire night event with a large bonfire but you think there may be many small children, you might want to consider whether you need to erect a temporary barrier around the bonfire area to stop children running towards the fire.

It's important to remember that a risk assessment is not a static document. Circumstances and conditions change over time and the risk may need re-evaluation from time to time to ensure that no new risks need managing. By using your newly acquired knowledge and experience, you will find that this is relatively easy and pain free to do.



With the best will in the world, you cannot predict everything that might happen on the day. Even if you have a written risk assessment, continue to make common sense judgements about the dangers and hazards that might occur during the activity or event and make adjustments as you go. Making sure that everyone is safe and that risks are minimised will help you have a happy event and make all the planning worthwhile.

