

GUIDELINES - 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.

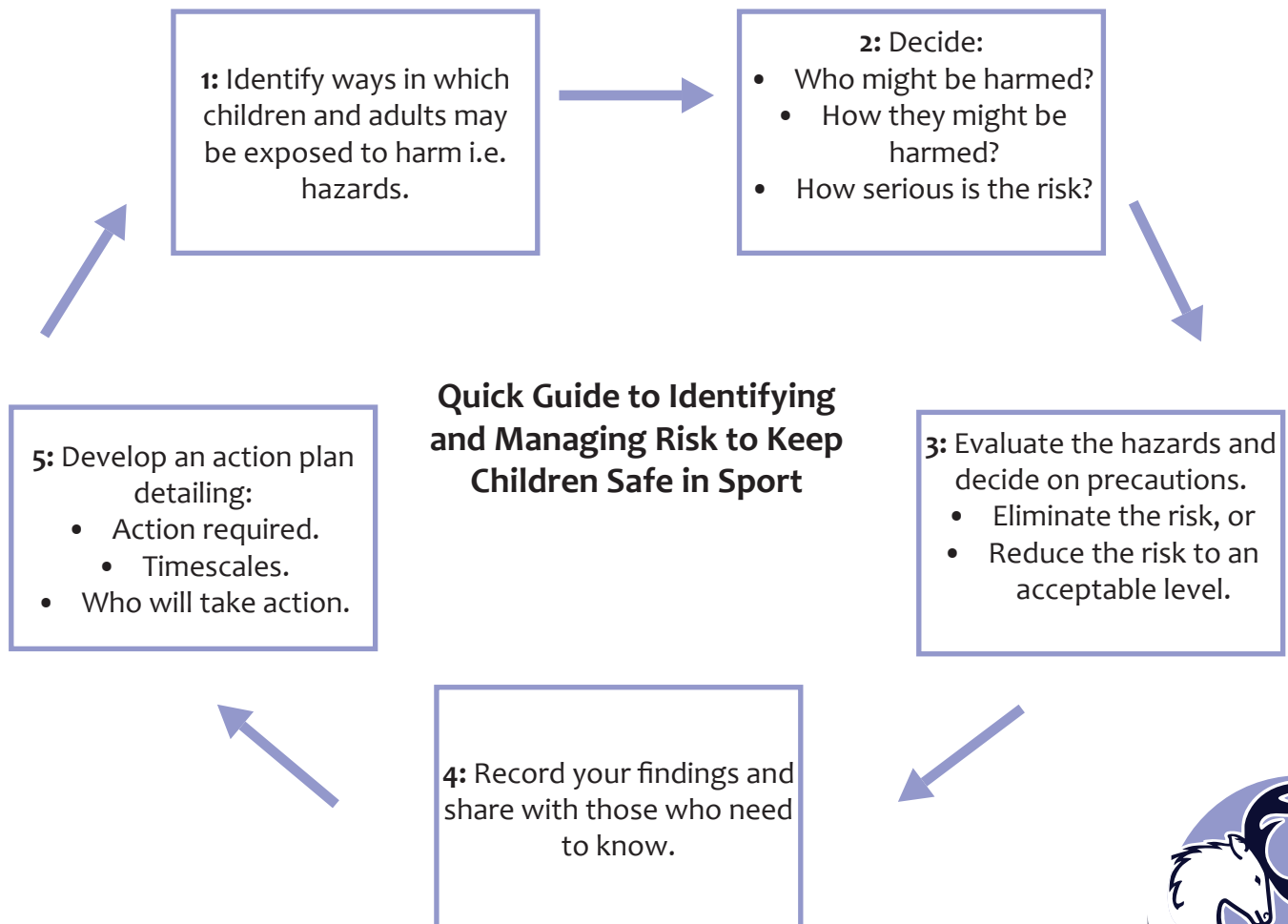
We can't be expected to eliminate every possible risk. We don't want to wrap children in cotton wool or have so many procedures and so much paperwork that staff and volunteers are prevented from carrying out their roles, or worse, put off altogether.



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.



IDENTIFY WAYS IN WHICH CHILDREN AND ADULTS COULD BE HARMED, i.e. HAZARDS

First you need to work out how children, staff/volunteers could be harmed. This could be through:

- The general failure of the organisation to meet its responsibility to keep children safe.
- Failure to ensure that those who work or volunteer with children are suitable to do so.
- Failure to ensure that all activities and events are safe for children.
- Failure to take action to help a child who discloses they are being harmed or abused out with sport.
- Failure to take action to address the harmful or potentially harmful behaviour of someone within sport.
- Failure to provide information or training to staff and volunteers who are part of the organisation.

How will you identify other hazards in your sport or organisation?

- Ask staff and volunteers. Asking others will give you a broad and objective perspective rather than relying on one person's knowledge and experience.
- Ask parents/carers/children.
- Have a look back over any incidents or issues which have arisen or been reported.

DECIDE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED AND HOW

For each hazard identified; decide who might be harmed and how. Try to be as specific as you can, for example, if there are no seatbelts in the minibus passengers may be injured if there is an accident.

Think carefully about the people involved in the activity. Young children are generally more dependent on adults, and athletes with a physical or learning disability may require special assistance during activities.

Are there other special considerations in your sport or organisation?

EVALUATE THE HAZARDS AND DECIDE ON PRECAUTIONS

When you know what the hazards are you need to consider the risk, i.e. how likely it is that harm could occur and how serious it would be. This is often described as 'rating' risk. For example:

High:	could occur quite easily
Medium:	could occur sometimes
Low:	unlikely, although conceivable

It is up to your organisation to decide what action you will take, but remember that the law expects you to do what is reasonable in all the circumstances. The recommended good practice, guidance and procedures on each of the areas covered in the Framework for Risk Assessment and Suggestions for Risk Management are regarded as reasonable.



Start by identifying what you currently do. Then compare this to the recommended good practice and further information within the Framework for Risk Assessment and Suggestions for Risk Management. Is there anything you need to do to bring your organisation up to the standards set out in the recommended good practice?

The key questions to answer in relation to each hazard are:

1. Can we eliminate the risk altogether?
2. If yes, what do we need to do to achieve this?
3. If no, what can we do that will allow us to manage the risk so that it becomes an acceptable level of risk?

Ask children, parents/carers, staff and volunteers what will be realistic and work in practice.

RECORD YOUR FINDINGS AND ACT ON THEM

It is helpful to record the result of your risk assessment. The risk assessment form will help you to do this. The benefits of recording are:

- It shows everyone involved that you take this seriously and that you value their involvement.
- It will be helpful in the future when you look back to review what action was identified.

Keep it simple; for example, for medical emergencies: medical information forms issued, completed forms held by coach, annual check forms up-to-date.

If there are a number of actions required, tackle the important ones or those which are rated 'high' first. Agree timescales for addressing the other actions and who will be responsible.

REVIEW YOUR RISK ASSESSMENT AND UPDATE IF NECESSARY

On completion of your first risk assessment, decide when you will conduct the next one. It's a good idea to fix a date for this. This might be annually for some areas or more frequently for others.

In reviewing your risk assessment ask yourself, has anything changed? Are there improvements still to be made? Have you learned anything from problems which have arisen since the last assessment? If anything significant happens between scheduled assessments don't wait to make changes.

NOTE: INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

It is now common practice for insurance brokers to insist on a risk assessment for child welfare and protection. This publication is a general guide and each organisation must check with its insurers on their own specific requirements to ensure these are met.

