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## Risk Management – What to record and how

You can find further guidance in document 4.3c '*Risk Management – an Overview*' and 4.3f '*Risk Management – some practical advice*'.

### Introduction

Employers are required by law to carry out risk assessments and, where five or more people are employed, record any significant findings. In the context of outdoor learning and off-site visits, this means recording (as simply as possible) **what you plan to do**, as a result of identifying risks and making a judgement about the balance of benefits and risks.

A risk assessment record should not be complicated or lengthy; it could be thought of as the minutes of a staff meeting involving the Visit Leader, where any significant issues, and how to manage them, were discussed and recorded.

There is no legal requirement to produce a risk assessment in any particular format - notes on the back of an envelope could serve the purpose - because it is **the quality of the recorded thought process** that matters, not **how** it is recorded. Establishments and leaders should use a format that is meaningful to them and demonstrates that all significant risks have been identified and taken account of in the visit planning.

When producing risk assessment records for visits or activities, avoid using formulae or terms such as 'high, medium or low' to 'measure' the level of risk. Trying to apply such subjective 'measures' of risk to a group of young people, all of whom behave differently in different circumstances, may suggest an unreal level of certainty and cloud the practical issues that need to be managed. The final decision must be that the risk for each participant can be kept within 'acceptable' levels.

**It is important for a risk assessment to be undertaken by a competent person, and for the written record to be dated, and to indicate who completed it.**

## Two possible levels of documentation

Risk assessments may be recorded at two different levels: Generic and visit-specific. Whether both of these are used, how, and in what combination, is the choice of an employer or establishment. What matters is that for any activity or visit:

- The documents, individually or in combination, record any significant findings for the specific group, and the particular venue(s) to which they will be taken, and address the 'SAGE' variables (Staff, Activity, Group, Environment).
- All involved understand the plan as much as they need to, particularly their role and responsibilities within it and what they need to do.
- What is recorded happens in practice.

### Generic documents

Generic documents can be used to cover the significant risks that you would always expect to manage in any relevant experience or activity. They might include National Guidance, employer or establishment policies, and procedures or policies from National Governing Bodies.

Generic risk assessments are best when they form part of an establishment's policy and procedures. Examples include:

- Some establishments designate a 'local learning area', within which any routine visits may happen as a matter of course - in the same way as any on-site learning.
- Establishments may have standard procedures for such things as: using transport, supervision of swimming pool changing rooms, walking to local venues etc.
- Prior to a visit to the seaside, you might decide to adopt the National Guidance documents 'Natural Water Bathing' and 'Group Safety at the Water Margins' and ask leaders to read these and adhere to them.
- An instructor qualified to lead an adventurous activity could be required to work in accordance with guidance from the National Governing Body for their qualification or to work to the in-house syllabus they were trained against. It is not necessary for such guidance to be repeated.

### Visit Specific documents

These could record all significant findings for a particular visit or they may simply record issues not covered by existing generic documents.

**If existing generic documents cover everything then there is no need to repeat anything.** In the absence of generic documents, any significant findings should be included in the visit specific record.

The following are examples of formats that have been used effectively for event specific records – there will be many other variations.

- Electronic visit notification and approval systems may include risk assessment recording within the process.
- A narrative form (some teachers find writing 'the story' of their visit a simple task but completing a risk assessment form leaves them cold).

- Similar to the above but in the form of a lesson plan with a time line down the side and highlighting who needs to be informed about doing what and when.
- A two or more column format listing significant risks (what might go wrong) and the appropriate control measures (what you will do about it). This format can use extra columns to record additional information if desired. See example 1 below.
- An 'aide memoire' format where different text boxes are used to list the significant risks and the steps taken to manage them. With additional boxes, if desired, giving space for reference notes or to identify key tasks and timings etc. See example 2 below.
- Visit planning meeting minutes.
- Letters / briefing notes / information sheets / emails / etc.
- Audio, video, annotated illustrations and maps.

Example 1. A simple two column format

The need for, and content of, any introductory information depends on how this form fits into a recording system or whether it stands alone.		
Issue	How to manage it	
		Additional columns can be added, if useful, to, for example, identify responsibilities for key actions, identify who needs to be informed of what etc

Example 2. A simple 'aide memoire' format

The need for, and content of, any introductory information depends on how this form fits into a recording system or whether it stands alone.
Hazards / Risks
Controls
Additional rows or boxes may, if useful, be used for notes or to identify key actions or as an aide memoire for key timings etc.

