

Guidance on Risk Assessment of Activities with Children and Young People



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Risk assessment is an important part of working with children and young people. It assists with managing both health and safety issues, and the welfare of those involved in the activity.

The core component of this statement is risk assessment. This should focus on any risks of harm to a child and young person, that could occur while availing of, or in attendance in your service, or at the activity you are organising.

As adults we assess risks throughout our lives, but when working with children and young people, it is important to consider potential hazards that may lead to risk to children and young people and to the adults who work with them.

Consideration of how to control or manage risks is critical. It is important to identify acceptable levels of risk, as it may not be possible to eliminate all risk, however every effort must be made to mitigate against its adverse effects. If you do not feel equipped to identify or address a risk locally, consult with your Safeguarding Committee.

Whilst this guidance is concerned primarily with risks associated with failure to follow effective safeguarding practice, it must be understood alongside the health and safety regulation and policy of the Diocese.

Whilst the focus on risk assessment should be on groups of children and young people with whom you are working, as opposed to the physical venue, if a problem with the venue is discovered during the course of the assessment, (e.g. broken glass, electrical cabling) this needs to be raised with the appropriate authority in charge of health and safety for the parish/Diocese.

What does the term 'risk' mean?

A risk is a potential source of harm or adverse health effect on a person or persons. In Northern Ireland, **Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI** takes its definition from the **Children (NI) Order 1995** which defines 'harm' as ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development. It states that 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse, forms of ill-treatment which are physical and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical; 'health' means physical and / or mental health; and 'development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

How do I undertake a risk assessment

- 1) **Recognise** who is at risk of being harmed (for example children, volunteers, parents).
- 2) **Identify** the actual risk (e.g. injury).
- 3) **Detail** how to reduce likelihood of harm occurring.
- 4) **Record** the controls measures.
- 5) **Review** your assessment and update if necessary.

These should be documented in the risk assessment template.

This guidance and template form, sits alongside any other Health & Safety regulations and guidance.

Focus of the risk assessment should remain on the children and young people and those associated with the activity.

It may be helpful to consider the risks in stages of the activity, for example, what are the risks in advance of the activity, on arrival, during or after the activity.

Take responsibility for ensuring safe premises and procedures within the premises.

Please inform the Parish Priest or person in charge where there is a fault or issue with anything broken or damaged that could cause personal injury.

“Positive experience not an unsafe environment”

Relevant Forms

SO12 & SO13

USEFUL RESOURCES

- **Dept of Health – Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland**
- **Dept of Health – Children (NI) Order**