

## Risk Assessment Guidance

The following is information for the Committee as well as information for any member who undertakes an assessment and is based on the PTA-UK guidance document.

### What is a risk assessment?

The Health and Safety Executive states that a risk assessment is:

*"...simply a careful examination of what [at your event] could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm."*

The HSE also states:

*The law does not expect you to eliminate all risk, but you are required to protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'.*

A risk assessment will help us identify potential hazards, identify who might be harmed and how and determine whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more action needs to be taken to reduce the risk.

For any member who wishes for more information see the HSE's free publication Five Steps to Risk Assessment (single free copies are available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, C010 2WA, telephone: 01787 881165 or [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)).

When thinking about producing a risk assessment, remember:

- A hazard is **something that may cause harm**, such as trailing cables, hot water, overcrowding, wet floors.
- The risk is **the chance**, low or high, that persons at your event could be harmed by the hazards, together with an understanding as to **how serious** the harm could be.

### How to assess the risks at a PTA event

Step 1: Look at the hazards

First you need to work out how people assisting and attending the event might be harmed. This should include the build up to the event, the event itself and the break-down of the event. Your association may be holding the event off or on the school premises. If it is the latter then being familiar with the venue may mean that potential risks are more easily overlooked, so extra care should be taken. Either way you should:

- **Arrange to see the venue** so that you can familiarise yourself with the building(s) and rooms your association will be using.
- **Make a note of what might reasonably be expected to cause harm** and talk the preliminary findings through with the rest of the PTA Committee - other Committee members may think of things that you haven't considered.
- **Look at the risk assessments held on file** at the school/venue you are using; take these into account when preparing your own and make sure your association adheres to the recommendations e.g. if a school risk assessment states that the school hall holds a maximum number, this must be adhered to.
- **Arrange to meet with the person who is responsible for Health and Safety** at the school or venue you are using. You should also arrange to discuss your risk assessment with the caretaker/facilities manager if you feel this is appropriate. If additional guidance is still required, contact the Health and Safety person at your local authority.

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to understand **who** might be harmed as this will help you to identify the best way to manage the risk. This doesn't mean listing everyone that is likely to be at your event but rather by identifying groups of people e.g.:

- PTA Committee members.
- Pupils.
- School staff.
- The general public.

In each case identify **how** the person(s) might be harmed i.e. what type of injury might occur. For example, children on a bouncy castle might fall off and injure themselves.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks, decide if they are acceptable, and agree the precautions needed.

Once the hazards have been identified, you then, as a Committee, need to **decide what to do** about them. The law requires you to do everything reasonably practicable to protect people from harm. **Assess the risks** and decide whether existing precautions are adequate; if not decide what more needs to be done to bring the risk down to an acceptable level. Look at what you are hoping to do and discuss what steps you might take to minimise the risk e.g.:

- Site the bouncy castle on the grass.
- Place PE mats around the fall-out area.
- Limit the numbers using the bouncy castle (and by age-range).
- Have at least two "spotters".
- Remove over-excited users that might cause harm to themselves or others.

When evaluating the risks your association should ask the question - can the hazard be removed completely? If not, you should agree what needs to be done to control the risks so that an accident is unlikely.

#### Step 4: Record your findings and implement them

Once your association has identified the various hazards and agreed the steps needed to minimise the risk, you need to **record the findings** and **share them** with the Committee. This will help when putting the findings of the risk assessment into practice - the most important part of the whole process.

When recording the findings, the HSE states that this can be kept very simple, for example - 'members of the public may trip over rubbish - black sacks will be strategically located and PTA Committee members will remove and replace at frequent intervals'.

Your association should keep all risk assessments on file as they will probably be needed when running the event again and will provide a good starting point for new Committee members.

#### Step 5: Review your assessment and update if necessary

Even if your association is running the same event, at the same time, in the same place every year, no two events are ever exactly alike. The organisers must therefore review what they are doing, at the planning stage of the event. You can use a previous risk assessment as long as it has been reviewed:

- Have there been any changes?
- Have your fellow PTA colleagues identified another potential hazard?
- Have you learnt anything from the previous event - what accidents, incidents happened last time?

A risk assessment template has been prepared for PTA-UK members to modify and use, when risk assessing events. Points to note:

- Don't over complicate the process.
- Remember a hazard is anything that may cause harm, such as electricity, trailing cables, hot water.
- The risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these or other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

#### PTA UK resources

##### Risk assessment template

HSE PTA Risk Assessment Template is held on the school website

#### Useful contacts

- Health and Safety Executive <http://www.hse.gov.uk/> 0800 345 0055
- HSE Books <http://www.hsebooks.co.uk/> 01787 881165
- Five Steps to Risk Assessment [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)