

STANDARD 1

CREATING AND MAINTAINING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 1.8

1.8A Guidance on Hazard Assessment of Activities with Children

Introduction

Risk assessment is an important part of working with children. It assists with managing both health and safety issues, and the welfare of children. Part 2, Article 11 of the Children First Act 2015 requires all services who work with children to have a child safeguarding statement. The core component of this statement is risk assessment. This should focus on any risks of harm to a child that could occur while availing of or in attendance in your service. As adults we assess risks throughout our lives, but when working with children it is important to consider potential hazards that may lead to risk to children 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 the 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 Church body.

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

What does the term 'risk' mean?

A risk is a potential source of harm or adverse health effect on a person or persons. In the Republic of Ireland 'Risk' in the context of this risk assessment is the risk of harm to children as defined in the Children First Act (2015) – (a) assault, ill-treatment, or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or (b) the sexual abuse of a child whether by a single act, omission, or circumstance or by a series or combination acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise.

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.

In the context of the Church related activities involving children may include the following examples

- failure to comply with effective safeguarding practice, such as lack of supervision ratios or consent forms;
- medical risks, such as failure to take medication, or inappropriate intimate care practice;
- physical risks, such as dangerous electrical cabling, or proximity to water.

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Assessing risks

For each activity that involves ministry with children, those involved in leading the ministry should meet with the parish priest/local superior (face to face or virtually) and any relevant safeguarding personnel and complete the following steps:

1. Identify and list the risks: look for hazards in the nature of the activity, and in the place where you are holding the activity. Areas to be considered include:

- Have all staff and volunteers been recruited properly? (including vetting reference checks etc).
- Have all staff and volunteers been trained in safeguarding and in working with children?
- Does everyone understand their role?
- Does everyone know what to do if they are concerned about a child?
- Have appropriate supervision ratios been put in place?
- Have children and their carers been informed of rules for the activity and given their consent to participate?
- Have practical considerations been assessed for risk – e.g. where are toilets, washing and changing facilities?
- What security measures have been considered – e.g. access to the venue by non- participants?
- Will ICT be used in the activity? Who has access and how is it monitored?
- Has consideration been given to the safe collection of children after the activity?
- Has everyone been briefed on the content of the risk assessment and what policies to follow in the event that a concern is identified?
- Does everyone know who the DLP is and how to contact them?

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

2. Identify the controls that need to be put in place to limit the risk.

3. Identify who is responsible for managing the risk and the correct implementation of the associated procedures. This should include those directly responsible for the children's ministry and those with specific responsibilities for child safeguarding in the Church body.

4. These steps should be used to complete the risk assessment form (Guidance 1.8A Template 1).

The leaders of each local activity involving children's ministry are required to identify risks and procedures relevant to its own situation. Some examples are given in the following template.

Given the similarities that exist across certain activities, whatever the location, it is likely that these examples may be appropriate to many situations. However, it is important that those completing a risk assessment keep the focus on their own situation and even where identified risks are the same as those in the example template (1.8A Template 1), consider whether the needed controls may differ based on the local context of the activity. The risk assessment must be available to all. Leaders of activities with children must have a copy and be aware of its contents.

Reviews

Risk should be periodically reviewed, especially in circumstances when a venue changes, a new activity takes place or the members of the group change. If no new risks are present, a review of the risk assessment should take place at least annually.

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1.8A Template 1: Example Hazard Assessment Form

This form will be held in accordance with the data protection policy of [INSERT NAME OF CHURCH BODY]. The data entered will be used only for the purposes indicated on the form. This hazard assessment is part of Child Safeguarding Statement which is available here [INSERT DETAIL].

- This risk assessment seeks to identify any potential for harm, as defined in the Children First Act 2015/Co-operating to Safeguard Children in Northern Ireland (delete as appropriate), to a child while participating in activities organised by [INSERT NAME OF ACTIVITY OR CHURCH BODY] and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to manage identified risks.
- It will be reviewed at least annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a new risk identified or any other relevant change.
- 'Risk' in the context of this risk assessment is the risk of harm to children as defined in the Children First Act (2015)/Co-operating to Safeguard Children in Northern Ireland (delete as appropriate)

Name of group/activity _____ Date of risk assessment _____ Date of review _____

Person completing the hazard assessment _____ Role _____

Others attending planning meeting: _____

Identified Risks	Controls/procedures in place to manage risk	Persons responsible
Supervision Failure to provide for appropriate supervision of children during arrival, during activity or on departure from the group/activity, may expose children to harm from adults, other children or environmental factors.	Safe care procedures including joint consent; adequate supervision ratios; children and adults signing in; Codes of Behaviour for children and adults; training for personnel; dealing with accidents.	Group Leader Volunteer Parent volunteer Responsible for: Supervision, ensuring consent forms signed and logged, sign-in and sign out book, agreeing Code of Behaviour, checking appropriate training completed.
Risk of harm from leaders	Safe recruitment procedures, codes of behaviour, vetting.	Group Leader Safeguarding Committee Vetting Coordinator Parish Priest/Local Superior Responsible for: Ensuring recruitment procedures are followed including vetting and appropriate procedures are in place.

<p>Shared Facilities</p> <p>Children may be exposed to risk of inappropriate behaviour which could cause them harm from visitors or other adults or bullying by other children in shared facilities eg changing area, toilets.</p>	<p>Code of behaviour for adults including guidance on 1:1 contact with children; Complaints procedure; Anti-bullying policy; Safe recruitment procedures.</p>	<p>Group Leader Ensuring recruitment procedures followed/supervision etc Local Safeguarding Rep Parish Priest/Local Superior.</p>
<p>Accidental Injury</p> <p>Risk of injury in setting up, clearing items, from fire or wet areas eg possibility of slips/trips, possibility of burns.</p>	<p>Adequate supervision; Instruction for children; Health and Safety policy in place; First Aid provision; Accident procedure.</p>	<p>Group Leader First Aider Check for H+S issues/First Aid training/ Supervision.</p>
<p>Children's Behaviour</p> <p>Harm to children from disruptive behaviour.</p>	<p>Code of behaviour for children; Dealing with Breaches of the Code of Behaviour; Anti-bullying policy; Appropriate supervision; Training for relevant adults; Adequate supervision ratio.</p>	<p>Group Leader Agree a code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy with children/implementation of code of behaviour.</p>
<p>Communicating and training concerns</p> <p>Children experiencing harm or on-going harm as a result of not being aware of who to speak to if they experience inappropriate behaviour or have concerns re safeguarding.</p> <p>Risk of harm caused by leaders not recognising the indicators of abuse or being unfamiliar with responsibilities and procedures for reporting child protection concerns.</p>	<p>Communications policy; Children advised of who to speak to; Information leaflet provided regarding concerns or complainants; Guidance provided to adult personnel on responding to a child and reporting allegations or concerns; Information displayed in Church properties.</p> <p>Training plan in place and relevant training delivered to relevant Church personnel, including, reporting procedures, indicators of abuse, record keeping etc.</p>	<p>Group Leader/PSR Safeguarding Committee. Providing information to children and parents/ ensuring relevant posters displayed/ ensuring all personnel have completed relevant training.</p> <p>Safeguarding Committee Trainers.</p>
<p>ICT</p> <p>Access to use of ICT in venue resulting in possibility of inappropriate contacts/accessing inappropriate content/ online bullying resulting in harm to the child.</p>	<p>Children not allowed to use their phones, email or other ICT applications while participating in activities. Procedures in place re use of ICT by personnel in contacting children.</p>	<p>Group Leader Ensure personnel are aware of policy and procedures re ICT use/ agree protocol with children</p>