

## An Introduction to Safety in Clubs

### Module 1 - Complying with the Law and Assessing Risk

Welcome to your EduCare course on safety for clubs, groups and societies. The purpose of the course is to give you a refresher on the safety requirements that you must take into account when your actions and activities involve other people; for example, adult staff and volunteers, visitors, members and any children or young people. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all that you must do to comply with legislation and best practice because different organisations will have different levels of requirement.

#### Health & Safety

If your club, group or society employs even one person or takes payment in kind for any work done, in the eyes of the law it will be regarded as an employer and subject to the full force of health and safety legislation. You also have a legal duty of care for all persons, no matter what the size, activity or income of your club, or whether you have any paid staff or not.

The legal framework is set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSW Act) and in a number of regulations that have been issued under the Act. These regulations give detailed information about specific areas; for example, electricity, how licensed premises should operate, equipment and fire safety.

Although there is a large amount of health and safety law, there is no need for you to know it chapter and verse. Rather, like the Highway Code, you need to know what to do to comply.

#### What the law requires

Under the HSW Act, employers and the self-employed are obliged to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of anyone who may be affected by what the organisation does, or fails to do. This includes all employees, volunteers, trainees, part-timers, temporary staff and contractors, those who use the organisation's space and facilities, visitors, members of the public who may be affected and anyone who uses any products produced or imported by the organisation.

#### What basic actions must you take to comply?

- Provide adequate training, information, instruction and supervision for employees.
- Provide information and instruction to non-employees (for example, volunteers).
- Provide and maintain safe plant and equipment (for example, grass cutting equipment or sports equipment).
- Ensure safe handling, storage and use of substances.

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- Have a written, up-to-date health and safety policy (for 5 employees or more).
- Display a current certificate as required by the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 if anyone is employed.
- Provide necessary Personal Protective Equipment, free of charge, to employees; for example, ear plugs if operating noisy equipment.
- Display the current health and safety law poster or hand out the equivalent leaflet.
- Notify, as specified, certain types of injuries, occupational diseases to the central Incident Contact Centre (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/> or telephone **0845 300 9923**), or to your enforcing authority if it is out of hours. In the case of clubs, groups and societies, this will be your local authority.
- Consult with employees on certain issues such as changes which might affect their health and safety and any information and training, which has to be provided. Set up a safety committee if required by representatives.
- Notify occupation of premises to your local enforcing authority using Health and Safety Executive (HSE) forms.
- Not employ children of under school leaving age, apart from on authorised work experience schemes.
- Carry out appropriate risk assessments and, if 5 or more people are employed, this includes special assessments for young people and new or nursing mothers. The significant findings must be recorded.

Let's now take the final point about risk assessments and explore it further.

## Hazards and risks

A hazard is a danger that can cause harm, loss or damage, and a risk is the chance, high or low, that someone will be harmed by the hazard. The important thing to consider is whether an incident or hazard is likely to occur and whether the precautions you have put in place are sufficient to minimise the risk of it occurring. Conducting a risk assessment will help you to decide.

## What is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment involves:

- identifying hazards
- deciding who could be harmed and how it could happen
- evaluating risks and deciding whether the existing controls are sufficient
- recording the significant findings
- reviewing and revising the assessment as necessary.

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In most clubs, the hazards are limited and simple. Identifying the hazards is not complicated and the risk assessment is nothing more than a proper consideration of what could harm people and whether the precautions are adequate. Every day when we drive on the road we have to judge risks. We must consider the oncoming traffic, the size of the vehicle in front, the space available to overtake, the state of the road, weather conditions, visibility, pedestrians and road markings. This is all that is required in a risk assessment – considering what could cause harm, how likely it is to happen, how severe the consequences could be and how to reduce or control them.

**The HSE have suggested a simple 5-step approach which involves:**

## **1. Identifying hazards – A hazard can be:**

**Mechanical** – moving machinery; for example, a sit-on lawnmower.

**Physical** – slipping on a slippery floor or tripping on uneven flooring or trailing cables.

**Chemical** – spillage of corrosive acid that could damage skin and eyes, toxic chemicals that could harm by being breathed in, very fine dusts that could affect the lungs etc.

**Environmental** – polluted air from burning waste, poor lighting or ventilation.

**Biological** – bacteria produced when poor hygiene conditions prevail and especially in kitchens.

**Organisational** – working with unreasonable timescales or excessive workloads, using an unsafe way of working where instructions are not provided or given, poor supervision where untrained or inexperienced people make mistakes.

Remember some hazards are not obvious and it may not be possible to feel, hear or see them until it is too late; for example, colourless and odourless gases such as carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide or electricity.

## **2. Deciding who might be harmed and how this could happen**

This could involve young volunteers, cleaners, visitors, contractors or members of the public.

## **3. Evaluating the risks and deciding whether the existing controls are sufficient**

The level of risk depends on how severe the harm could be and how likely it is to happen. This will determine how much has to be done to reduce the risk. For each significant hazard, decide whether the remaining risk is high, medium or low. In taking action, ask yourself whether:

- a. *the hazard can be eliminated altogether*
- b. *if not, can the risks be controlled so that harm is unlikely.*

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## 4. Recording the significant findings (unless there are less than 5 employees).

Insignificant risks never need to be recorded. If you have policies or guides where hazards are listed and controls set out, these can be referred to rather than spelling them all out again.

## 5. Reviewing and revising the assessment as necessary

For example, when new machines or equipment are brought in or different cleaning chemicals used.

Risk assessments are best carried out by people who are familiar with the club routines, as they know what the problems are and what potential dangers they face. In summary, risk assessments must be suitable and sufficient, **not perfect**. If you are a sports club, your National Governing Body has a duty to identify the risks associated with your sport and provide advice and guidance to member clubs. However they do not have the sole responsibility for health and safety, as it is the clubs who organise most activities and events, so your club will be responsible for the health and safety risks associated with them.

Here are some areas that you may like to consider for your risk assessment:

### **Do your club activities involve children and young people?**

Consider any likely hazards they may encounter. All clubs should have a child protection policy and it is best practice to have an anti-bullying policy and a children's rights policy. Are parent/carers' contact details kept safe and secure, what arrangements are in place if there is an accident or a child feels unwell. What is your policy on children in changing rooms? Do you ban dogs from your club grounds because of the hazard posed to children by their faeces?

Close attention should also be paid to your staff and volunteer recruitment policy – do you always interview people face-to-face and take up references, specifically asking about the candidate's attitude towards children? Do you ensure you make any criminal records checks if they are applicable? Are people given an induction period and supervised to ensure they understand the boundaries? It is a sad fact that child abusers are drawn to organisations that will bring them into close contact with children and young people. It is your job to take every possible precaution to ensure people who may pose a threat to children do not get the opportunity.

### **Do you have gas appliances?**

These could be deadly if they are not regularly checked by a qualified gas installer who is on the Gas Safe Register.

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## **What electrical appliances are there on-site?**

The HSE states that 25% of all reportable electrical accidents involve portable appliances. The Electricity at Work Regulations place a legal responsibility on employers, employees and self-employed persons to comply with the regulations and take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that no danger results from the use of such equipment. This in effect requires the implementation of a systematic and regular programme of maintenance, inspection and testing (often called PAT testing).

## **Do you use hazardous substances?**

For example, as part of your club house maintenance or in the kitchen. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) is the law that requires employers to control substances that are hazardous to health.

## **Is the fabric of the building kept in good repair to prevent it from being a hazard to employees, volunteers and members?**

Inspect it regularly and keep a log of all work undertaken. Even if it is not your building, but you still use it, it is your responsibility to report any defects to your landlord or whoever owns the building.

## **Is there any manual handling involved in what you do?**

For example, employees handling beer barrels, staff maintaining the grounds or kitchen staff manhandling sacks of potatoes. If so, they should be trained in how to move heavy goods safely. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations apply to a wide range of manual handling activities, including lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling or carrying.

## **Do you prepare food on the premises?**

Have your food handlers been trained and are they supervised? Is there a fully qualified person in charge when food is being prepared and served?

## **Do you operate a bar?**

There are many hazards associated with running a bar and you will need a Premises License and a Personal License, both of which you can get from your local authority.

## **What is the likelihood of any accidents and incidents?**

Have you identified the risks involved in what you do and taken reasonable precautions to prevent injury and ill-health? Are there any slip hazards? Do you keep a fully stocked first aid box and is there always someone on duty who is qualified to use it? Do you keep an accident/incident book to record details of any mishaps? The law relating to this is the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995. For sports clubs, there is a requirement to report injuries that result from acts of violence, but it excludes sports injuries if taking part in the sport implies that participants accept a level of violence and risk of injury. This would apply to contact sports such as boxing and rugby, provided that the injuries result from activities that are in compliance with the laws of the sport.

## **What is the risk of fire?**

Fire and smoke inhalation kill and they are one of the biggest single threats to any organisation. For your risk assessment, consider the likelihood of internal and external fires, caused for example, by a skip or bin being set on fire adjacent to the building. We will explore fire in more detail in the next module.

## **Crime**

How do you maintain entrance security, for example, do members need to display a membership card to enter? Do you need to provide secure lockers for members in the changing area? What is the likelihood of the premises being targeted by thieves or arsonists? What preventative measures have you put in place to minimise the likelihood of this occurring? There will be more about preventing crime in the next module.

## **In summary**

In this module we have looked at health and safety and in particular the importance of complying with the law. We have also looked at hazards, risks and risk assessments. A risk assessment and regular reviews should be part and parcel of running your club. In the next module, we will focus on crime and fire prevention.