# Introducing Risk Assessments

All events carry risk, to ensure the best possible outcome for your Heritage Open Day, all events must carry out a risk assessment. Every event and every setting is different, so every risk assessment must be site and event specific.

This guide has some handy hints to consider but it is only a starting point and not intended to be exhaustive. See the links for more information and detailed guidance.

## What is a risk assessment?

'Risk assessment' means examining carefully what might cause harm and subsequently deciding on the precautions that are in place or need to be. The aim of any risk assessment is to identify risks and take reasonably practical and proportionate measures to minimise the likelihood of any harm or damage occurring.

You need to distinguish between:

- Hazards = Something with the potential to cause harm.
- Risks = The likelihood and the severity of the harm.

For example:

A wet and slippery surface clearly constitutes a hazard that could lead to injury. The risk associated with the hazard is that passers-by could slip and hurt themselves.

The following factors can help evaluate the nature, likelihood and degree of harm that might arise from a hazard:

- The history of previous accidents.
- The number or type of people who will pass or could come into contact with the hazard.

[Download a Risk Assessment Template from your Organiser Area](#) (with examples)

## Why do a risk assessment?

**It's a legal requirement.** Everyone who organises events or manages places that attract members of the public needs to have a system for managing health and safety to anticipate, monitor and control potential risks. The insurer of your property or activity will want to see proof of your assessment in case of an accident and ensuing claim, so you need to keep a written record of this assessment.

**It's common sense!** It may take up some of your time during the preparatory stages but could spare you a lot of hassle later on.

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# 5 steps of risk assessment

## Step 1: Look for the hazard

Try to see your property or event location with a stranger's eye. Visualise what could happen to someone who is not familiar with the location and look out for any physical features or objects that could lead to accidents or overcrowding. These include, but are not limited to:

- Steep steps / Fall from height.
- Uneven or slippery flooring.
- Low ceilings / beams and other possible obstructions.
- Dead ends and locked gates.
- Convergence of several routes into one.

## Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

Identify your potential visitor groups (e.g. children, elderly people, people with special needs etc.) and what obstacles and hidden hazards they may encounter when visiting your building or participating in your event.

When thinking of hazards and risks, consider both physical as well as behavioural aspects. For example, young children who are less aware of hazards and move quickly are particularly in danger of hurting themselves, while people with visual impairments will need extra bold signage in order to find their way safely through your property. Rough surfaces could cause difficulties for people with inadequate footwear, so you may want to recommend in the event directory or your posters that stout shoes should be worn.

Whoever your visitors are, they all have in common that they are not familiar with the layout, the circulation routes and facilities of the property or location. This unfamiliarity itself constitutes a hazard.

## Step 3: Evaluate risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done

Once you have identified the hazards and the risks associated, consider some appropriate precautions and control measures. Start by asking yourself:

a. Can I get rid of the hazard altogether? And if not…

b. How can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely and not a high risk?

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Examples of possible measures include, but are not limited to:

- Closing all areas or restricting access to areas that could be dangerous.
- Signposting hazards and providing warning information for visitors regarding particular features along the route.
- Posting and training sufficient volunteers to point out features on the visitor route, to direct visitors appropriately and take charge in an emergency.
- Operating a strict non-smoking policy.
- Providing an emergency escape that is safe and effective for all.

Other practical measures could include:

- Checking your First-Aid kit is fully stocked.
- Making sure there is a telephone/fully charged mobile on site.

## Step 4: Record your findings and implement them

Capture all precautionary or control measures that can either eliminate or reduce the identified risks and keep a written record of your assessment; it will remind you and others of particular hazards and precautions and is a requirement of the insurance cover.

The best way of recording your assessment is in the form of a table where you note down:

- The hazards to health and safety you have identified.
- The potential risks that may arise from them to volunteers, staff and members of the public.
- Existing precautions.
- The degree of risk you have achieved through these precautions.
- Any additional measures you feel you need to take to lower the risk further.

It is also important to note where you have identified a hazard but have chosen not to implement any, or any additional, mitigation measures, giving the reasons why you have made that choice.

Once you've completed your form, don't lock it away and forget about it. It's an action plan and as part of its implementation you need to brief all members of staff and volunteers about hazards, precautions and emergency strategies.

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

It is good practice to repeat and update your assessment whenever there is a change to your premises or the set-up of your event.

Conditions can change on the day, e.g. you're overwhelmed by high visitor turn-outs or rain makes a path slippery. So, be prepared to reassess your safety measures during your event too. Record any changes on the risk assessment form, along with why the change was thought necessary.

# Some specific areas to consider

## Health & safety

The 5 steps are taken from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). For further information on considerations for general health & safety please consult your local Environmental Health Officer or the HSE website: http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk

## Fire

The government website has a simple 5-step guide and checklist with some basic guidance on fire safety risk assessments downloadable here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/14899/fsra-5-step-checklist.pdf

For further information about fire risk assessments and emergency plans, please check your local County Fire and Rescue Service website, which provide a lot of up to date and local fire safety information.

## Safeguarding: working with young people & adults at risk

Anyone under the age of 18 engaging in a HODs activity or event, whether it is online or in person, must be accompanied by an adult or have the consent of an adult to ensure their wellbeing and safety. Any adult attending who requires care and assistance in order to attend must also be accompanied by an adult. Ensure you have a clear reporting method for any concerns.

- Useful source of guidance: Ann Craft Trust: Safeguarding Adults and Young People at Risk
- Our national festival safeguarding page for your reference: Festival safeguarding

## Food hygiene

If you plan to offer cakes and refreshments during Heritage Open Days, you need to be aware of food safety requirements and regulations. Depending on the scale of your event and your catering activity, you may need to apply for a Food Hygiene Certificate. It's best to check with your local Environmental Health Officer.

You will also find guidance on food hygiene, the latest food safety regulations and a lot more useful information - including how to list allergenic ingredients - on the Food Standards Agency's website: www.food.gov.uk

## Alcohol & entertainment licensing

If your event includes the sale of alcohol, music, dancing or other dramatic performances, you may need to apply for a Temporary Event License. Interpretations vary locally. So to be on the safe side, check with the Licensing department at your Local Authority. Don't leave it to the last minute. Factor in at least

four weeks to apply for a license if this turns out to be necessary.

For more information about licensing, visit the government website:
http://www.gov.uk/guidance/alcohol-licensing

# Online events

## Unwelcome guests

Virtual meetings can sometimes be hijacked by unwelcome guests with malicious content. To minimise the risk of this happening consider:

- Make events pre-bookable. Rather than making the event link public, send it only to those who have booked, and emphasise it should not be shared. This also allows you to prepare visitors for what to expect, eg. if you are using a waiting room / best etiquette for the event / age restrictions or guidance.
- Ensure the event is also password protected, so people can't join without the exact link or password.
- Enable a 'waiting room' so you only let in people you recognise, and make sure you know how to 'evict' people – Nb. you will need to allow extra time before starting the event to administer this, also, be aware that, depending on how people register and join, it may not be obvious who is in the waiting room. It might show their device (e.g. ipad7) not their name.

## Visitor participation

If you are running an activity that visitors can participate in, it is worth highlighting hazards to be aware of, as you would for an in-person event.

- Remind visitors to clear space for the activity, be mindful of their surroundings e.g. Lily's dance routine
- If you have created a downloadable trail, are there any particular hazards they should watch out for, e.g. busy roads, rocky paths etc.

## Technical gremlins

When connecting to different technical platforms there is a risk of transmitting a computer virus:

- Ensure your computer is clear and up to date with anti-virus protection.
- Use platforms you trust.
- See details above on unwelcome guests.

## Data protection

GDPR legislation requires us all to ensure people are aware what their data is being used for, and how it will be stored. They must give active consent for its use:

- If you are asking people to book for an event, be careful how you store their contact details, they must never be shared without consent, and should be deleted as soon as possible.  If you email people, do so individually or use

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blind copy, never allow others to see everyone's details.

- If inviting people to an online event like a webinar, it is a good idea to use a system where the guest details are hidden from each other.

For more information see the [Information Commissioner's Office Guide to Data Protection](#)

## Copyright rules

You might refer to a map or painting etc in your talk/tour/trail. Who owns these? If they are under copyright you will need to get permission to use/include them.

- [Check the government guidelines here.](#) (This includes a section on exceptions)
- [The Copyright Licensing Agency has a good introduction to copyright](#)

# What to do if something happens

It's almost impossible to eliminate all risk and the law recognises this. In most cases it doesn't take much to ensure that people are protected from harm. But if something happens despite your best efforts, what then?

## Act promptly and professionally

Deal with incidents in a diligent and helpful manner; this may range from making the person affected comfortable to calling the ambulance. Focus on the wellbeing of the visitor, offer no opinions or comments that might admit liability.

## Capture and communicate

Record the facts (not opinions) accurately and comprehensively, take notes from anyone who saw what happened as well as their contact details. Take photographs of the area in question.

If you have requested insurance through Heritage Open Days pass everything on immediately to the national team and our insurance broker:

- Email: [info@heritageopendays.org.uk](mailto:info@heritageopendays.org.uk) + [insuranceoffice@ajg.com](mailto:insuranceoffice@ajg.com)
- Subject line: Heritage Open Days incident report

If you receive a Claims Notification Form from a claimant's solicitors, do not acknowledge it, you must forward it via email within 24 hours of receipt. All communication should be done through the insurers.

## Review and update

Review your risk assessment and update if required. You may decide that no changes are necessary and the existing risk control measures in place are adequate despite an incident occurring, but you should still record that it has been reviewed.