**RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT**

Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA) is an approach to risk assessment that focuses not just on the risks of the activity, but on the benefits of the activity. It is particularly valuable in the context of residentials and outdoor learning and as such as been adopted by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Rospa), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and other leading education associations as their preferred method of risk assessment.

RBA, sometimes also known as Risk Benefit Analysis, starts with the principle that risk is an essential element in the development of children’s physical, emotional and intellectual development. RBA helps decision makers ascertain whether the level of risk inherent in an activity is ‘worth it’ – in other words that the benefits young people gain from the activity outweigh the risks associated with it.

Using a RBA approach still means you need to consider how to mitigate risk and clarify how you will deal with risk. Learning through Landscapes, the national school grounds charity, suggests a quirky way of examining risks: imagine how children would miss out, if they *weren’t* able to engage in the activity in question – in other words, carry out a ‘reverse’ risk assessment. For example,

* What would young people miss out on, if they never learned how to light and manage a fire? What would the risks be, if they didn’t learn these skills?

When it’s couched in that way, it’s easy to justify why (using this example) fire management is an important skill and that we should be looking at ways of enabling young people to experience it.

By tackling risks in a safe, managed environment and supported by caring, knowledgeable adults, young people gain the skills and confidence to take on bigger risks as they grow older. Risk isn’t just about physical actions – for example climbing a tree or skateboarding. It’s also about taking intellectual risks – trying anything for the first time, testing new ideas, accepting other people’s opinions (even if you don’t agree with them). Residentials are perfect places to practise and develop these skills. Young people will also encounter emotional risks throughout their lives, so by developing a culture of risk taking through residentials and outdoor learning, schools help them manage difficult times ahead.

**MAKING IT WORK**

You will already have written risk assessments for your residentials and will be ‘dynamically’ risk assessing throughout the residential itself. RBA invites you to think about how you can *enable* exciting activity, rather than *preventing* it. You’ll need to look at the **hazards**, and decide whether, on balance, the hazard represents an **acceptable risk** or an **unacceptable risk**. The outcome might be different for each student, depending on their own ability and confidence levels, as well as the context of the risk - that’s where the mitigating factors, or ‘precautions’, come in.

Use the RBA template overleaf to risk benefit assess some of the activities you already do on residentials. Then, when you feel confident using it, ask young people to risk benefit assess their residential, working through the template to establish how, together, you can make it happen.

**MORE INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION**

* PlayLink – have a look at their very detailed [Risk Benefit Assessment form](http://www.playlink.org/pubs/Risk-bformWeb15.12.09.pdf)
* Managing Risk in Play Provision – Play Safety Forum / Play England. [Download the PDF.](http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/managing-risk-in-play-provision-implementation-guide.aspx)
* High Level Statement on Children’s play: a balanced approach – HSE. [Download the PDF.](http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm)

**RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Location / Activity:** |  | **Date:** |  |
| **Assessor:** |  | **Review date:** |  |

The boxes in the table below will expand as you type into them; pre-entered text is simply for illustration. You should delete irrelevant items and replace with text relevant to your circumstances.

**Your overall risk rating – Low, medium or high – is based on your judgement about whether the BENEFITS of the activity or opportunity outweigh the RISKS.**

| **ACTIVITY** | **How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?** | **Possible hazards** | **Who is at risk?** | **PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury** | **Overall risk RATING: L/M/H** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| POND DIPPING: Slippery pond decking or edges | The decking allows close access to the contents of the pond and is an essential component of exploring this habitat. | Slips, trips and falls.  Cuts, grazes and abrasions.  Drowning. | Young people; adults | * Banks shallow and planted to prevent accidental entry. * No access to banks for young people; use decking or ‘beach’ area only. * Deepest area is centre of pond – keep to edges. * Perimeter kept clear of dense or high foliage so pond edges are clearly defined and can be seen / avoided. * Dipping platform kept clear of trip hazards (e.g. nets, trays) * Pond use rules clearly displayed and reviewed at the start of each session. | Low |
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