

Volunteer Role Risk Assessments

Risk management is a system to forecast risks in advance and take proactive steps to deal with identified risks. Conducting volunteer role risk assessments will help promote and ensure the safety of volunteers, staff and service users within your organisation. Best practice suggests that risk assessments should be carried out for all volunteer roles. The idea behind any risk assessment is to identify the risks to the volunteer, decide on the measures you will take to minimise those risks, implement those measures and identify who is responsible for managing the risk for this role. You may also want to look at the probability of the risk occurring and what impact it might have if it does in fact occur. Carrying out a risk assessment requires a detailed knowledge of your organisation's activities and of each volunteer role. Therefore, in order to get an accurate picture of the risks and how they can be managed it is useful to include relevant staff and volunteers in the risk assessment process.

There are 3 basic steps to Risk Assessment:

1. Identify the Risks or Hazards

Identify the risks or hazards i.e. anything that has the potential to cause harm, in terms of human injury or ill-health. Don't over complicate the process. There is no need to consider every minor hazard or risk which we accept as part of our everyday lives. Common hazards might include tripping, incorrect lifting of heavy equipment, using unfamiliar or inappropriate tools, exposure to cold, heat, or sun in outdoor roles, possibility of boundaries being overstepped or of physical harm from service users.

2. Identify the Controls

Identify the controls, measures or improvements that need to be put in place to avoid or reduce the risk. Your controls are the most significant part of the risk assessment, as they set out the steps that must be followed to protect people and ensure safety. Controls may include providing relevant training, using protective clothing or equipment, providing breaks, eliminating hazards, working in pairs, or providing regular support and supervision.

3. Identify the Level of Risk

Identify the level of risk for each hazard i.e. the chance or likelihood of harm occurring, coupled with how severe the harm or ill health could be. Prioritise dealing with high risk hazards first.

You can reduce risks by:

- ▶ Reviewing your risk assessments annually to see if the role or work practices have changed and if any new risks have arisen.
- ▶ Ensuring volunteers are included on your organisation's insurance.
- ▶ Developing clear written role descriptions

- ▶ Selecting volunteers with the skill set and personal attributes that are best suited for the role.
- ▶ Ensuring volunteers are appropriately screened for each role e.g. face-to-face interviews, Garda Vetting, and/or reference checks.
- ▶ Ensuring all volunteers receive appropriate orientation and training for the tasks they are to do.
- ▶ Having appropriate risk, health and safety and evacuation and emergency policies and procedures in place. And by ensuring all staff and volunteers are familiar with them.
- ▶ Providing the volunteer with a walk through of the role or work site e.g. office, centre or event site.
- ▶ Ensuring all tools and machinery are used in accordance with their safety instructions and protective equipment/clothing is used appropriately.
- ▶ Ensuring volunteers are briefed on how to report risks and injuries.
- ▶ Ensuring all volunteers receive adequate support and supervision for the role.

Other Key Principles & Considerations

- ▶ Preventative risk management is essential for all organisations and all volunteer roles.
- ▶ While you may be reluctant to put a volunteer in a certain role, with the proper risk assessment and controls in place a volunteer can do any role.
- ▶ Not all roles carry the same level of risk.
- ▶ Don't assume there are no risks attached to your volunteer roles just because there have been no problems to date.

On the following pages you will find a volunteer role risk assessment template and a sample template already filled in for a Youth Cafe Volunteer. You are welcome to use or adapt this template for use in your organisation's volunteer programme.



Volunteer Role Risk Assessment Template

<p>Name of Volunteer Role (include a brief outline of the role):</p> <p>Youth Cafe Volunteer- will be responsible for the running of the cafe. Tasks include serving refreshments, befriending and general cleaning duties.</p>	<p>Date: _____</p> <p>Name: <u>of responsible person</u> _____</p> <p>Title: _____</p>
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It is suggested you walk through or tour the area of volunteering, identifying items of risk (either situational or structural) and record them in the risk assessment table below

Hazard/ risk	Controls	Level of risk
Please assess the role/ site /area /office for risks and record them in this column.	Identify the controls to be put in place to reduce or minimise the risk and keep the individual or area safe.	Is it High, Medium or low risk? Consider eliminating or minimising the highest risks first.
Child protection	All volunteers will be interviewed, vetted, references will be checked. They will be provided with an induction, first aid and child protection.	High
Fire	We will run regular fire drills, identify an outdoor evacuation location, train volunteers in how to use fire extinguishers and implement a sign-in book at the reception area.	High
Anti-social behaviour (drug, alcohol , substance related)	Volunteers will always be assigned to work in pairs. Extra security will be hired on Friday and Saturday nights. Volunteers will receive training in how to identify and deal with anti-social behaviour.	Medium
Accidents	First aid box clearly identified, safety precautions such as anti-slip signs etc will be in use. Volunteers to be trained in managing accidents.	Medium