Keeping ourselves safe - A guide to managing risks at activities

Parkinson’s UK provides spaces, activities and events to encourage people to come together. We come together to offer support and activities, for example exercise classes, lunches, outings and cafe afternoons, or to raise funds and awareness, including information stands and bucket collections. It’s what we’re known for, and what we’re proud of.

Activities offered by Parkinson’s UK provide vital support to those affected by Parkinson’s, so it is crucial they can be enjoyed in a way that doesn’t expose anyone attending or delivering the event to illness, injury or harm, and risk assessing helps us do that.

This document provides support around risk assessments, how to assess and manage risks, and where you can go for further support.

**Why do we risk assess?**

Managing risk is something we naturally do everyday when we cross the road, make a cup of tea or take exercise. Occasionally we may injure ourselves, but we learn from that and change what we do or find a tool to help us do it without injury next time.

No activity can ever be completely risk free, even with good planning. However, if something does go wrong, good risk management will help minimise the impact.

Knowing an activity or venue has been risk assessed is reassuring to us all. It shows that we’re working with an organisation that values us and our safety.

A risk assessment is not just about preventing injury or illness. A risk assessment is also a compulsory element of insurance arrangements. If an accident occurs at an activity arranged by Parkinson’s UK, then the insurers will want to see evidence that the activity had a risk assessment in place. **If a risk assessment is not completed for an activity, it is not covered by insurance.** So, by completing a risk assessment we aren’t just keeping ourselves safe, but also keeping the charity safe too.

**What is a risk assessment?**

A risk assessment is really just a list of hazards that could cause harm to people in the delivery of an activity, what the risk is that this hazard might occur and what we have done to reduce the likelihood of injury or illness occurring. You can see some helpful definitions of the terms used in the risk assessment process below:

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| **Hazards** | **Risk score** | **Mitigating actions** |
| Hazards are sources of potential harm. Some are easy to spot, such as loose flooring, hot drinks, moving traffic and so on. Others may be less obvious, even simple objects such as chairs can be hazardous in certain situations.  Hazards aren’t always things that might cause an injury or accident, they can include recognising how we could be exposed to something that might make us unwell or contract a virus.  However, most hazardous things also include benefits (chairs are good for sitting on), which is why you need to take a balanced view about hazards. | A risk score is the likelihood that something will happen combined with how big an impact it would have *if* that hazard had an impact on a person.  Likelihood and impact risks are calculated on a low, medium and high level. Each level is scored between 1 for low risk, to 3 for high risk. By multiplying these scores together you get a **risk score** for the hazard - this calculation is automatically done for you if you are using the [online form](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GzcLpVsBLizVu4hT-Hcobqw23Gu01pjavPV7z85OS8Y/edit?usp=sharing).  You should grade each hazard in this way to understand how much of a threat it poses to the delivery of your activity. | These are the steps you have taken, or will take, to respond to the risk score and therefore reduce the risk of causing injury, illness or harm.  It might not always be possible to eliminate the risk for example if there is a loose floorboard it wouldn’t be practical or cost effective to resurface an entire floor. So, cordoning off the area and putting signs up to warn people would be an appropriate mitigating action. |

**How do we complete a risk assessment?**

1. The best way to identify risks is to walk through the activity from start to finish. Imagine arriving at your activity and consider the hazards there might be, what is the risk that this hazard might occur and what mitigating actions you could take to avoid this happening.
2. Remember, a risk assessment isn’t just about the safe delivery of activities for those attending, but we also want to make sure that those delivering or arranging the activities are covered too. So in your process make sure you include what is needed to set the activity up, and what is required to close it down again.
3. Do this for every hazard identified, it might seem unlikely, but each hazard may have a different effect, likelihood and severity so it’s best to not lump them altogether.
   1. When you multiply the likelihood that the risk might happen with the severity of the impact happening you will get a **risk score**. While we should be taking steps to reduce risks across all our activities, the risk score helps prioritise those activities which pose the greatest risk, so you can mitigate these or decide if the activity is too dangerous to run.

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| **Risk score** | **Appropriate action** |
| 1-2 | Acceptable level of risk, but maintain controls |
| 3-4 | Acceptable but look to improve with further mitigating measures where possible |
| 6-9 | Unacceptable and further mitigation required |

After the mitigating measures you should recalculate the risk score so that you can demonstrate how you have reduced the risk of the activity. If your risks are still too high you may want to discuss whether the activity, *or that element of the activity*, cannot be delivered.

1. Make sure the risk assessment features the date it was completed and the names of those who wrote it. This helps us ensure assessments are kept up to date, and if anyone is in any doubt about what something means they can always contact one of the authors.
2. If the activity or event will have over 50 people in attendance, please send a copy of your risk assessment to [facilities@parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:facilities@parkinsons.org.uk).
3. When the risk assessment is completed it should be signed off by someone on behalf of Parkinson’s UK. This can be a member of staff or another volunteer, i.e. Chair of a local group or nominated committee lead. This person should be confident that this activity is suitably risk assessed and it can be delivered in a way which reduces the exposure to risks where they exist.
4. A record of the risk assessment should be kept up to date and accessible should it be needed to set the activity up, or for an investigation if needed.

When completing the template, you will end up with a risk score between 1 and 9 per line. It may be good to get someone else to check over the Risk Assessment to make sure that you both have the same opinion on the risk scores. If, after considering the mitigating measures you still end up with a risk score of 6 or above, you should contact your line manager or volunteering staff contact to discuss how you might be able to mitigate it to bring it into a more acceptable level of risk, eliminate the risk or if the activity (or this element of it) carries too much risk to run it.

**Activities delivered by a provider.** An activity organised by you may be delivered by a provider with whom you must have a local contract. They will have their own risk assessment in place for that activity but you should still ask to see this, review it and you may need to add to it in terms of people attending a particular venue or to ensure that Parkinson’s has been taken into account.

**Completed a risk assessment, what next?**

A risk assessment isn’t something that should sit on a shelf and gather dust, or take up file space in your computer. You should keep the assessment under review regularly, so that it remains up to date and doing it as a group will share the responsibility evenly and take full advantage of the skills and experiences available. And make sure you’re using it whenever you run that specific activity. It should be a working document. You should have it to hand when you set up your activity and while you deliver it - it helps to provide a reminder if you need to take any specialist equipment or signage with you. Have it with you on the day and use it to refer to. If you have it with you you can also make sure you keep it updated. If you get to your venue and there is a hazard you hadn’t expected, you can note it down, quickly calculate the risk score and detail what mitigating measures you have put in place. For example, if you get to the community centre and the kettle is not safe to use then you may have to say no hot drinks can be served until it’s fixed.

If there are changes to your activity which might significantly affect your hazards and risk ratings, for example a change of venue or a delivery of a different type of exercise, you need to complete a new assessment.

This will help us to feel confident knowing we’ve taken all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of injury, illness or harm, and protecting the charity, you should go ahead and *enjoy your activity*.

**Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

It’s not just injury and accidents we need to mitigate, but also what steps we can take to reduce the likelihood of someone contracting an illness at one of our events, and coronavirus is something we need to be particularly cautious of at the moment.

To support the starting of in-person activities with the risks of coronavirus we have produced a toolkit with guides and support. You can access the toolkit [here](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1sFU6PGl6GPh6_Ol0t1Jkkhwa4FUMsw_pG4EhB7nc3Pg/edit?ts=607ef669#slide=id.g9153de8b1d_0_7), or speak with your line manager or volunteering staff contact for more information.

People coming together at an activity provides an opportunity for coronavirus to be contracted, and therefore as a risk it needs to be mitigated, and therefore we should reference it in the risk assessment.

If the type of activity and circumstances you want to deliver in (ie venue or numbers to attend) are permitted within your UK or devolved government guidelines, you should then use your risk assessment to consider anything that may expose people to coronavirus, such as:

* people being too close together
* transmitting air droplets
* touching shared surfaces
* shaking hands or providing personal support
* local or national rules changing following government or devolved authority guidance

A full list of hazards and control measures, including signposting to nation specific guidance can be found in the [Parkinson’s UK Organisational Risk Assessment](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KtvrtzSVd12NQS1JT9aMhApmr4g2BPVv0GAoyJlQXtM/edit?usp=sharing) , or speak with your line manager or volunteering staff contact for more information.

**What happens if there is an accident, injury or something goes wrong?**

**Attend to the immediate first.** Depending on what has happened will dictate what you should do, for example if someone has spilled a drink but no one has been scalded or slipped on the wet surface, you can clean up the spill and continue with the activity. If the spill resulted in injury you must first make sure the affected person has the support they need, this may include contacting emergency services and then assess whether you must stop the event. Use other people around you - you may ask someone to address the hazard where appropriate while you’re dealing with the injury so no one else gets hurt in the meantime.

You should [report any accidents, incidents or near misses](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1koJW-3PV2hzlx17HH4PG0_vH1z7kH9G7ZywAUnW5az4/edit) when they occur.

**A final few top tips**

* You don't need to over risk assess. All controls put in place should be proportional to the size of the risk. For example, a control for a wet floor could simply *dry up the spill*, with no need to cordon off the area or put out slippery floor signs. But itemising it in your assessment just means you will have thought to have a mop or something similar to hand.
* Completing a risk assessment doesn’t mean accidents won’t happen. They happen every day. But by demonstrating we have taken steps to reduce the likelihood of accidents happening we can be best prepared to support when they do.
* Remember that risks may be different when considering people with Parkinson’s as opposed to those without - for example with balance and mobility – make sure to take this into account.

**Useful resources**

* [Parkinson’s UK risk assessment template](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GzcLpVsBLizVu4hT-Hcobqw23Gu01pjavPV7z85OS8Y/edit?usp=sharing), or you can print out the version a the bottom of this guide if you’d like to complete by hand
* Remember, you aren’t doing this on your own. Speak with your peers, line manager or volunteering staff contact if you want any support at any point of working through a risk assessment.

**Putting on any activity means accepting some level of risk. But by working together, building confidence, and going through this process we can reduce the risks and enjoy our time together safely.**

Parkinson’s UK risk assessment

Parkinson’s UK activity risk assessment template

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| --- | --- |
| **Event/Activity (brief description):** | **Date assessment completed:** |
| **Name(s) of those completing the risk assessment:** | **Address of Event/Activity:** |
| **Name and role of person signing off by Parkinson’s UK:** | **Date of sign off:** |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Hazards**  What are the hazards? | **Effects**  What might happen because of this hazard? | **Mitigations**  How have you reduced the risk already? | **Likelihood of risk occurring after mitigations**  **(1=low, 2=medium, 3=high)** | **The impact of the risk after mitigations**  **(1=low, 2=medium, 3=high)** | **Total risk score** |
|  | Physical hazards are relatively easy to spot but some other kinds need to be thought about. | The possible effects of any hazard can vary. You may therefore want to think of a range of effects for certain hazards. | Consider what can be done to minimise the risks. | How likely is it that the effect will happen? | How bad would the effect be if it happened? |  |
|  | *Unloading the car* | *People may hurt their back carrying heavy equipment or resources long distances* | *Instruct the person that needs to unload to park near the door while doing so and move the car afterwards. Pack the resources into smaller, more manageable boxes.* | *1* | *1* | *1* |
|  | *Potholes in carpark* | *Someone might fall over* | *Let people know that the car park ground is uneven beforehand* | *2* | *2* | *4* |
|  | *No disabled access to venue* | *Difficult to get wheelchairs in, could cause problems for the person pushing and the person in the wheelchair* | *Agree with the venue that they will provide a disabled ramp and support people getting wheelchairs up it* | *1* | *2* | *2* |
|  | *Fire doors need to be easily accessed and marked clearly* | *If they are obstructed or not clear and there is a fire, people may get stuck in the venue* | *Ensure that fire doors are free of obstructions on arrival. Make sure that everyone knows where the exits are in case of a fire* | *1* | *1* | *1* |
|  | *Fire Extinguishers* | *There may not be any in case of emergency* | *Ensure that there are extinguishers fitted and that they are maintained and suitably located* | *1* | *2* | *2* |
|  | *Slips, trips and falls in the venue* | *Minor injuries to broken bones* |  | *1* | *2* | *2* |
|  | *Serving teas and coffees* | *People may get scalded* | *Invested in appropriate temperature cups. Someone will be on hand to carry cups to tables if necessary* | *1* | *2* | *2* |
|  | *Serving teas and coffees* | *People may catch COVID-19* | *Only have one person in the kitchen responsible for refreshments. Ensure they wash their hands regularly, wear a mask and avoid touching their face.* | *1* | *2* | *2* |
|  | *Water station* | *People may slip on spilled water and cause injury* | *Towels available to mop up spilt water* | *1* | *1* | *1* |
|  | *People sitting too close together* | *People may catch COVID-19* | *Ensure that tables are spaced out and there aren’t too many chairs at each table. Encourage people to only sit in their household. Make sure people have to book so the room isn’t over capacity.* | *1* | *2* | *2* |
|  | *Raffle* | *Money may get taken or lost* | *Ensure that there is someone with the money at all times and a locked tin is used. Make sure that the person transporting the money can do so in a safe way e.g. not using public transport* | *1* | *2* | *2* |
|  | *Speaker doing a presentation* | *People may trip over wires* | *Ensure that all wires are taped down so people can’t trip. Let people know that they are there.* | *1* | *1* | *1* |
|  | *Speaker using a projector* | *The projector may catch fire* | *Ensure that there are no papers around the projector that may cause it to overheat* | *1* | *1* | *1* |
|  | *Moving tables and chairs* | *People may strain themselves with heavy lifting* | *Make sure that there is sufficient equipment to move tables and chairs and people know how to do so safely* | *1* | *1* | *1* |
| **1** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **2** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **3** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **4** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **12** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **13** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **14** |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Add more rows if needed**