**How to carry out a RISK ASSESSMENT for a church children’s or youth group**

It’s good practice to carry out a risk assessment at least once a year for each of your children’s groups. You should also complete a separate risk assessment for any outings which are planned.

**Why do I need to do it?**

It might seem like an additional piece of paper/admin, but the reality is that IF there was to be a serious accident, a court of law could want to know what precautions you had put in place to help prevent such an accident. You cannot completely eradicate risk, obviously, but the law requires us to protect people as far as “reasonably practicable”. Having a completed risk assessment in your file is one way that you could show that you had done this. (Of course you need to act on it too!)

**How will I do it?**

You can use the attached form, or a similar version of your own. There are five steps to follow.

**Step 1** Identify the **HAZARDS** and list them. This might be done as you walk around the location of the group, but you need to imagine what happens when there are adults and children in the room if they’re not actually there when you do this. Your risks could include reference to ratios, having leaders who have been recruited according to safer recruitment principles (ask me if you’re not sure) as well as physical hazards like scissors, loose carpets, unsafe door latches etc.

**Step 2** Decide **WHO** might be affected. Children or adults? Is one age group at greater risk than another? WHAT might happen?

**Step 3** Write down what you currently do to minimise this risk. Most of us judge and act on risks as we go along, often without really thinking about it. This is a chance to write down the existing good practise you use.

**Step 4** Plan any further **ACTION** which could be taken to further reduce the risk.

You could start by asking yourself two questions:

*Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?*

*If not, how can I control the risks so that harm becomes less likely?*

Here are some ideas that you could consider.

* Try a less risky option, change the materials or tools you are using.
* Prevent or limit access to the hazard eg. one child does it at a time.
* Put safety equipment in place such as a gate across a thoroughfare etc.
* Make sure you have first aid resources ready to help deal with injury promptly.
* Present any finding of material defects (such as loose carpets, ill-fitting cupboard doors etc.) to the relevant person on the PCC/Church fabric or maintenance group.

And these actions are **ESSENTIAL!**

* Ensure that all of the leaders and helpers in your group have an up to date CRB/DBS, in addition to references and confidential forms signed.
* Ensure your leaders and helpers have attended Safeguarding and First Aid training.
* Ensure that you have up to date information sheets for all your children so that you know about allergies and any other relevant medical information and that you know who to contact in an emergency. Ensure these forms are securely stored and accessable to leaders when needed.

**Step 5** Decide who is going to make sure that these actions are in place each time that the group meets. This could be more than one person if you have a rota for the group. It is essential to ensure that all on the rota know what actions need to be taken, you might need to check that they are actually done, at least until they become part of the routine.

It is good practice to allow the Incumbent and/or PCC to see these risk assessments, and you might need to do this if there are any funding issues revealed.

Write a note in your diary to revisit them in 12 months time, but if anything changes in the meantime, (for example the group increases in size, or if an accident occurs) you might need to re-do a Risk Assessment sooner.

Finally, a note about socket covers…

* **British 13 Amp sockets have built in automatic shutters to protect against children poking things in them.**
* First introduced more than 60 years ago, they are considered the safest in the world and do not require external covers.
* **No** responsible national body recommends using socket covers.
* That includes the UK Government, RoSPA, Ofsted, Child Accident Prevention Trust and Electrical Safety Council.
* Sockets are made to accept plugs which meet very exact requirements. Anything which is not a standard plug MUST be made to the same dimensions as required for plugs. No socket covers which meet those dimensions are available!

Please note, ALL UK power sockets (three rectangular pins) have shutters, even those which are 60 years old!
Socket covers introduce a variety of dangers; **they make sockets less safe, not more**.
Some socket covers have many faults, some just a few, but none makes sockets safer than they already are.
[www.fatallyflawed.org.uk](http://www.fatallyflawed.org.uk/) has lots of detail on socket covers, the dangers they create, and reviews of many different types.
Ofsted does not require you to use socket covers!

In the interests of safety you should regularly check the condition of your sockets, and you may want to include that in your risk assessment **BUT PLEASE DON’T USE SOCKET COVERS!**