

R1 Risk Assessment Guide

How to use the safeguarding risk assessment tool and when to apply it

Purpose

This guide explains what the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Tool is (R0), when and how to use it, and how it connects to the rest of the framework. It is an orientation guide — the full risk assessment tool is in R0.

Scope: this risk assessment process applies in two contexts: (1) individual projects and activities at the planning stage; and (2) ongoing organisational safeguarding risk reviews at DSL, management or board level, at minimum annually. Both uses are equally important.

1. What the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Is

A safeguarding risk assessment identifies what could go wrong in a project or organisational context, how likely it is, how serious the impact would be, and what you are doing about it. It is not a box-ticking exercise — it is the tool that makes your safeguarding planning real and specific.

The risk assessment integrates with your organisation's wider risk management framework wherever possible. Safeguarding risks belong in general organisational risk processes, not siloed separately. If your organisation has a risk register, board risk committee, or senior management risk review, safeguarding risks from R0 should feed into it regularly.

2. When to Conduct a Risk Assessment

Trigger	
Before every project begins	The full R0 risk assessment, covering all participants, activities, locations and partners.
When project details change significantly	A targeted review of the sections of R0 affected by the change (e.g. new location, new age group, new partner).
At minimum annually	A full organisational safeguarding risk review using R0. Present findings to the board as part of O4.
After a safeguarding incident	A targeted review to assess whether the risk register needs updating based on what was learned from the case.
When joining a new partnership	A review of partnership-specific risks using O1 Section 4 and R0.



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3. The Risk Assessment Process — Five Steps

Step	
1. Identify risks	What could go wrong? Consider: participant characteristics (age, vulnerability, prior experience); activity type (residential, travel, online, child contact); location and jurisdiction; staff and volunteer experience and training; partner organisations; and any previous safeguarding concerns.
2. Assess likelihood and impact	For each identified risk: how likely is it? How serious would the impact be? Use the R0 likelihood/impact matrix.
3. Identify controls	What are you already doing to reduce this risk? What additional measures can you put in place? Controls include: training, supervision ratios, screening, clear policies, anonymous reporting channels, partner agreements.
4. Assign responsibility	For each risk: who is responsible for the control measure? The DSL? A project coordinator? A partner organisation?
5. Review and update	The risk assessment is a live document. Review it at every project milestone, after any incident, and at minimum annually.

4. Connecting the Risk Assessment to the Rest of the Framework

Risk assessment finding	
Project involves children (under 18)	Activate R3 (Child Protection Measures) — complete all child-specific safeguards.
Project involves adult participants who may be at risk	Activate R4 (Safeguarding for Adult Participants at Risk) — conduct confidential needs assessment.
Project involves travel or residential	Activate A1 (Safe Travel) and/or A2 (Trips and Residentials).
Project has online or digital components	Activate A3 (Safeguarding in Online and Hybrid Activities).
Project involves partner organisations	Complete O1 (Partnership Safeguarding Agreement) and O2 (Monitoring Safeguarding in Partnerships).
High-risk specific contexts identified (radicalisation, trafficking, FGM, HBH)	Read R5 (Safeguarding in Specific Contexts). Brief the DSL and relevant staff.
Gaps in DSL training or capacity identified	Update P4 (Training Plan). Review P1 (DSL Appointment) for current tier appropriateness.

References

R0 Safeguarding Risk Assessment Tool — the full assessment tool. F0 Section I (Managing Safeguarding Risk). O4 Annual Self-Assessment Section 3.

Glossary of Key Terms (Safe Spaces) — for definitions of all bolded terms in this document.



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