

How to approach health and safety

 makingmusic.org.uk/resource/how-approach-health-and-safety



Health and Safety is one of those terms that can bring dread and derision in equal measure. With some of the stories you hear it's easy to see why it has a bad reputation. In practical terms though, all it really means is spending a little bit of time thinking about what risks exist in a particular situation and what can be done to minimise them.

It's mostly common sense and is not about removing every single possible risk – that's impossible! The point is to identify likely risks and then take sensible steps to minimise them. The key words to apply are; reasonable, sensible and practical. For example:

- Insisting audience members hand bags in to avoid the risk of tripping – not reasonable, sensible and practical
- Setting out seating so audience members have enough room and access – is reasonable, sensible and practical

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The legal part

The [Health & Safety Executive](#) (HSE) advises on health & safety in the workplace and there are certain things that employers must do. Most of our groups are not employers and so the requirements do not apply to them. However best practice is to treat volunteers as employees and groups have a responsibility to consider and manage the health and safety of anyone they work with (members, volunteers, audience, contractors, professionals etc.).

What does this mean for our group?

This guidance covers the things you should be thinking about and the documentation you should have in place when it comes to health and safety. We anticipate for most of our groups this will mean thinking about risks and hazards at your rehearsal and concert venues – and anywhere else you might perform or organise activities e.g. fundraising events.

What should we actually do?

- Develop a basic (one page) health and safety policy – this will help to focus your thinking and commitment to health and safety and provide a simple framework for dealing with it.
- Carry out a simple risk assessment for the venues you use – this is the practical side of identifying and minimising risk.

Often the venues will have their own health and safety policy and risk assessments – and it is a good idea to check this and ask to see them. But you should still do your own risk assessment specific to the activities you will be doing at the venue.

What should go in our policy?

The policy should set out:

- your commitment to providing a healthy and safe environment for your activities
- who is responsible for health and safety in your organisation
- the areas to consider in providing a healthy and safe environment and actions to be taken

We have a [template policy](#) (based on the template provided by the HSE) for members to use.

What is a risk assessment?

It is the process of assessing a venue or space to identify potential risks and then deciding if, and what, action needs to be taken to reduce those risks.

The best thing to do is to visit a venue before your event/activity and carry out a risk assessment. It should be done at least done several days before the event/activity so you have time to take any necessary action that may result from your risk assessment.

We have some template risk assessments to help:

- [Template risk assessment for rehearsals \(Excel\)](#)
- [Template risk assessment for performances \(Excel\)](#)

If you use a venue frequently (e.g. rehearsals) you do not need to do a risk assessment for each rehearsal – although you should review it annually or when something changes at the venue.

If you use a regular concert venue it is sensible to review your risk assessment before each concert – even if it is just to confirm nothing has changed.

What you need to think about as part of your risk assessment will depend on your specific activities and the venue but some common things to consider are:

- Likely causes of slips, trips and falls:
 - Electric cables - ensure they are covered and clearly marked
 - Equipment (e.g. instrument cases) not stored sensibly – if possible, provide a dedicated space for these, so that they are out of everyone’s way.
 - Risk of spills (refreshments etc.) – know where the cleaning-up facilities are and have them to hand - should you limit refreshments to certain areas? Is there a wet floor sign?
- Setting up, moving and using equipment/heavy objects:
 - Are enough people allocated to moving/setting up equipment?
 - Does everyone know their role and have clear instructions?
 - Are work areas clear?
 - What equipment will you need? (e.g. ladders)
 - Who will carry out final checks?
 - Is the equipment working properly?
 - Do you need professionals to set-up up any equipment? (e.g. staging)
 - Does any equipment need to be cordoned or have a warning sign? (e.g. hot lights)
 - Will anyone have to work at height?
 - Have you communicated the basics of Manual Handling to everyone and the importance of lifting correctly?
- Venue requirements:
 - Fire - know the exits and assembly points, keep them clear - make the audience aware
 - Are there adequate toilet facilities?
 - Is there sufficient lighting? (don’t forget about outside lighting for evening performances)
 - Access for unloading equipment – is there enough space to safely unload and carry equipment?
- Spread of infectious disease:
 - Ask people to stay away if they are unwell
 - Ventilation – can you open doors and windows to keep the space well ventilated?
 - Cleaning and hygiene procedures – is the venue cleaned before each use? Is there a sufficient supply of soap and bins?
- Weather (for outside performances):
 - Sun - is there enough shade for people – can you provide free water?
 - Wind - risk of equipment (e.g. music stands, the music on then, banners)
 - Rain - electrical equipment

- First Aid - see below
- Sound levels - see below

Training

Members and volunteers who help at your events should be provided with basic health and safety training. Good internal training is normally perfectly sufficient;

- a tour of the venue and facilities, highlighting potential risks
- providing clear instructions for any tasks, including manual handling.
- basics of fire and first aid procedures (I.e. who to inform, what to do in the first instance)

There are courses available for Health and Safety training but they cost money and are normally more than is required for community music groups. The HSE have lots of [free leaflets](#) that are a good reference point for internal training and handing out to volunteers (the one on Manual Handling may be of particular relevance). One area to consider formal training is first aid (see below).

First aid

As with Health and Safety legislation only employers have to provide first aid, and the legal provision does not extend to self-employed people. However, it is something you should consider when organising activities, and take sensible and practical steps to provide first aid.

Appointed Person: appointing someone to be in charge of first aid is a good idea. They do not have to be trained in first aid, it is just about a person (or people) being responsible. In practice this will mean:

- Knowing the location of first aid supplies (e.g. first aid kits, defibrillators) at your venue
- Knowing any local numbers that may be useful in case of an emergency.
- Designated to take charge if there is an incident, if only to call for assistance / emergency services if required

An appointed person is different to a qualified first aider. Having an appointed person will probably suffice for rehearsals and indeed for many performances too. But for larger performances you might want to consider having a qualified first aider.

Qualified first aider: a qualified first aider has the same responsibilities as an appointed person, but would also have specific training that means they could make an initial assessment of the injury or illness and give appropriate first aid until help arrives.

There are several factors that need to be considered when thinking about first aid provision for larger events. [St John Ambulance have some useful guidance](#), and recommend two first aiders per 1000 people as a rough benchmark.

RTC Medical Solutions have a risk tool to help calculate first aid levels required. They have four first aiders as a base level for under 1000. We think this is a little high for our members typical activities – but the tool could be useful for larger scale events.

If you do need to provide some qualified first aiders – or just think it might be a good idea - there are several options:

- Speak with the venue: some venues will already have qualified first aiders as part of their staff and so take care of it for you. Others might have a preferred company/supplier and charge you for this as part of the venue hire.
- Identify qualified first aiders connected to your group: The simplest way is to ask your group if anyone is already qualified. Perhaps a medical professional with first aid training or someone who has done a first aid qualification in a different walk of life. It does not have to be a member - a member might have a friend or relative who is qualified and would like to volunteer. Whoever it is, consider their availability during a performance. A rehearsal is fine - but if your first aider is performing and someone requires assistance, it . will be a problem.
- Train someone to be a first aider: If there isn't anyone already qualified, is someone interested in being trained? Again, it doesn't necessarily have to be a member - a friend or relative of a member may be interested in training and volunteering. There are lots of places that do basic courses for event first aid. The Red Cross and St John Ambulance are good places to look.
- Employ the services of trained volunteers for events: This is a good option to consider for very large events. There are lots of organisations who can help and there is normally a fee involved. Generally organisations will ask for some information about the event and your risk assessment and will then quote based on that. Some of the most well known are:

Medical facts

Some groups ask for key medical facts about members, such as allergies or conditions that might lead to illness or treatment / action being needed. This can be useful information to have, but as it is potentially sensitive you should be clear at the point of asking for it about why you need it, how you will use it, and who will have access to it. You should also ensure that this information is stored securely but crucially be accessible when it is needed.

Insurance

Groups who have an insurance policy with us do have some cover for members who carry out first aid. The cover does not remove the need for first aid provision, it is about if things go wrong in the provision of first aid. The policy provides cover for activities carried out by First Aiders and 'Good Samaritan' acts where an honest and reasonable attempt to help has been made, this includes the use of defibrillators.

Hearing safety

As a music group being aware of the hearing health of your members and audience is important.

There are Noise Regulations in place for professional musicians who are exposed to excessive noise levels on a frequent and intensive basis. It is not such a pressing issue for leisure-time groups and the regulations do not apply. However, it is something to be aware of and referencing it in your health and safety policy is a good way to do this.

Be pro-active about making your members aware that you take the issue seriously and that they can raise any concerns they have. Of course if concerns are raised you should take them seriously. There are practical things you can do - find out more in our [hearing loss resource](#). You might also find that by addressing hearing loss with members you encourage them to stay longer.

What next?

Our handy Health and safety policy template Risk Assessment template can help you identify and minimise any risks in your group's activities.

[Health and safety policy template](#)

[Template risk assessment for rehearsals \(Excel\)](#)

[Template risk assessment for performances \(Excel\)](#)

We hope you find this Making Music resource useful. If you have any comments or suggestions about the guidance please [contact us](#). Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the content of this guidance is accurate and up to date, Making Music do not warrant, nor accept any liability or responsibility for the completeness or accuracy of the content, or for any loss which may arise from reliance on the information contained in it.