Risk Assessments: Getting Started

A great place to start is to complete a risk assessment for your coaching space. Walk around the space as if you are a visitor seeing it for the first time and think about all of the things that could cause harm:

- Is there a surface or floor type that could be slipped on?
- Are there changes to surface types or levels that could be tripped on?
- Are you using equipment that someone could fall from?
- Are there doors that could trap fingers?
- Is the space high enough for the activity you are coaching?
- Are there suitable fire exits?

The above list is just some ideas to get you started. Remember, view the space like you are walking around it for the first time.

What is a hazard?

A hazard is defined by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as something (e.g. an object, a property of a substance, a phenomenon or an activity) that can cause adverse effects.

In coaching this could relate to a number of things:

- The space you are using, including participants accessing that space.
- The equipment necessary for your delivery, including the putting up and taking down of equipment and also the moving of it.
- The activity you are delivering.
- The use and storage of cleaning chemicals.

Some examples of a hazard could be:

- Water spilt on the floor from a participant's water bottle.
- Uneven floor surface or level either from the use of equipment or due to the building/space itself.
- Weather conditions if you are coaching outside.
- Mechanics of equipment that has to be set up for use.

What is a risk?

A risk is the likelihood that the hazard you have identified could cause harm to someone and a measure of how serious that harm could be.

An example could be:

Hazard – water on the floor from a participant's water bottle.

Risk – there is a risk of your participant slipping and falling on the water.

To evaluate how serious that harm could be, you would need to consider other factors, for example, where the water is. If it is on the sports hall floor, a fall may cause bumps and bruising. If it is on a flight of stairs, this could obviously result in a much more serious injury.

RAG rating your risk assessment

A clear and consistent approach to risk rating is critical to help you to prioritise your risk work. One way of achieving this is to RAG rate the risks:

- for the most serious that require immediate action.
- for those that require action after the RED's are dealt with.
- for a risk where you have either removed the hazard or found controls for (ways to reduce the risk to people).

Your rating can be calculated in a number of ways, but to keep it simple, consider using a scale of 1 to 5. There are two elements that will need to be rated to calculate and RAG rate the risk:

- The likelihood of it causing harm (where 1 is extremely unlikely and 5 is extremely likely)
- The consequence if it occurs (where 1 is no injury and 5 is a fatality). This should always be based on the worst case outcome.

The risk is then calculated as follows: RISK rating = LIKELIHOOD rating x CONSEQUENCE rating

The would then be given risk rating thresholds.

1 to 4, 5 to 12 and 13 to 25

LIKELIHOOD						CONSEQUENCE (Worst Case)						RISK RATING (Likelihood x Consequence)		
5	4	3	2	1		5	4	3	2	1		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Extremely LIkely	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely		Fatality	Severe Injury	Lost Time Injury	Minor Injury	No Injury		13-25	5-12	1-4

Scenario:

You hire a sports hall at a local leisure centre and in the area of the sports hall that you will be using, there is a loose cover on an electrical socket, exposing wires that could be touched. You work with children who might not understand the consequences of touching electrical cables and the socket would be within reach of the children.

The person you have identified as affected by the hazard is a participant.

The **HAZARD** you have identified is electrical shock from the faulty socket.

The **LIKELIHOOD** of a child touching the wires may be a 4 on the scale of 1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 5 (Extremely Likely) given that some children would know not to touch, but some may not.

The **CONSEQUENCE** of a child suffering an electrical shock could be a 5 on the scale of 1 (no injury) to 5 (Fatality).

So, your risk is:

(LIKELIHOOD) **4** x (CONSEQUENCE) **5** = (RISK RATING) **20**

This would RAG rate as  and require immediate attention.

What is a Control?

A control is the way you plan to either remove the hazard entirely or how you will reduce the risk as much as is reasonably possible. The control for a hazard you identify may already be in place, which would be factored into your rating.

In addition, you should record any additional control measures that can be put in place to further reduce the risk. These should have an action deadline, be prioritised by RAG rating, and be part of the risk assessment review process.

Assuming the additional controls have been put in place, the risk rating would be updated to reflect this.

Back to our scenario:

The person you identified as affected by the hazard is a participant.

The **HAZARD** you identified is Electrical Shock from the faulty socket.

The **LIKELIHOOD** of a child touching the wires may be a 4 on the scale of 1 (Unlikely) to 5 (Extremely Likely) given that some children would know not to touch, but some may not.

The **CONSEQUENCE** of a child suffering an electrical shock could be a 5 on the scale of 1 (no injury) to 5 (Fatality)

The **CONTROL** you have put in place is to fully block access to that area of the sports hall and make sure all activity takes place away from the faulty socket.

On the basis of that control, the **LIKELIHOOD** of a child touching the wires may now be a 2 on the scale of 1 (Unlikely) to 5 (Extremely Likely) as nobody should be able to access the fault without significant effort.

So, your risk is now:

(LIKELIHOOD) **2** x (CONSEQUENCE) **5** = (RISK RATING) **10**

This would RAG rate as  and will still require attention.

You may then record additional actions such as reporting the faulty socket to the site owners to get it made fully safe, with a date for when this will be completed. Assuming the repair takes place when you review your risk assessments, this risk can be removed as it no longer exists.