

The voice of the Voluntary Arts

Just how safe are you?

Health and Safety for voluntary arts organisations

This briefing describes how to go about managing health and safety in accordance with the rules and regulations, and how to go about putting a health and safety policy together. In order to do this you will need to examine your organisation's particular health and safety issues, right from your commitment to health and safety down to the fine detail on how to minimise the risk of, for example, an accident with a saw or a sewing machine.

Do we really need to bother?

Many small arts organisations think health and safety legislation only applies to the big boys. In some cases this may be true but unfortunately it's not necessarily size that counts here but what your organisation does. Everything you do, from putting on concerts to running classes could have health and safety implications.

Think about it:

- do you use paints, thinners or glues?
- do you work with children?
- are you involved with managing crowds at events?
- do you work with machinery, such as kilns, lathes, saws?
- do you ever have to take power outside for your work?
- do you fix temporary lighting for exhibitions or shows?
- do you move heavy items in and out of storage?
- do you own or rent a van or minibus?
- do you work on computers?
- what is your lighting like?
- do you store items on high shelves?

So even if you are a small organisation outside the scope of the Health and Safety at Work (etc) Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, it doesn't mean you do not have health and safety

issues you need to address. As illustrated you may well find you are already knee deep in such issues. It is important to realise that ultimately it is your responsibility to ensure anyone working with you or taking part in your activities is not exposed to unnecessary risks. Bearing this in mind it makes sense therefore to comply with the rules and regulations, and to take a more proactive approach to health and safety because of the arts activities you are involved in.

Why do we need to know about health and safety?

Every year thousands of people suffer ill health because of accidents at work. The most common injuries are caused by:

- lifting, carrying or handling
- slipping, tripping or falling
- being struck by a moving object or vehicle
- contact with moving machinery
- contact with harmful chemicals and substances
- contact with electricity
- animals
- becoming trapped
- the effects of fire: heat and smoke

What is involved?

By law, employers who have more than five employees must have a written health and safety policy, and they must:

- communicate it to everyone working within the organisation's control
- make it available for inspection
- review it regularly

Even if legally you are not obliged to draw up a policy, it is advisable because it sets out responsibilities and procedures for ensuring the health and safety of everyone involved with your organisation.



Health and Safety Policy Document

Your health and safety policy is a document that states your commitment to health and safety practices. It is the foundation that all your health and safety practices will be based on, setting out the tasks you undertake to ensure you are meeting necessary standards. These include:

- carrying out risk assessments
- making arrangements for the planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of health and safety measures
- appointing a competent person or persons to assist with health and safety
- establishing emergency procedures
- providing health and safety information and training.

The Health and Safety Executive has a booklet for small businesses, 'Stating your Business' which gives guidance on preparing a policy, and offers a model with gaps for you to fill in. It is very clearly set out, easy to use and provides notes to help you fill out each part of the document. It does however point out right at the beginning that 'what you write in the policy has to be put into practice. The true test of a health and safety policy is the actual workplace, not how well the statement is written.' Download it free from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg324.pdf or contact the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for a free copy.

Carrying out a risk assessment

Finding out what risks to health and safety exist, assessing how big these risks are and what steps can be taken to reduce them, will be the basis of your health and safety policy. Carrying out an assessment is not difficult, as long as you are systematic and examine your organisation and its activities carefully. One of the difficulties people often encounter during this process is knowing what to look for. Basically, a risk assessment involves looking for hazards, identifying the hazards in the workplace or place where you are carrying out your activities and then assessing the likelihood of harm resulting from them i.e. the risk the hazard presents.

a hazard – is something with the potential to cause harm

a risk – is the likelihood of harm from the hazard occurring

The HSE has also produced a useful publication to assist with this process: 'Five steps to risk assessment' This breaks the task of carrying out a risk assessment down into five easy steps.

- 1 look for the hazards
- 2 decide who might be harmed and how
- 3 evaluate the risk and decide if more needs to be done to reduce it
- 4 record your findings
- 5 review your assessment and revise it if necessary

Helpful hints on finding hazards

a. substances harmful to health

If you are involved in arts activities using paints, thinners, glues, enamels, pigments, dyes etc you need to pay special attention to how these are handled and where they are stored:

- are children likely to come into contact with them?
- is there sufficient ventilation in the area where they are used?
- what happens to waste?
- what protective clothing should be worn when handling them?
- are there any harmful substances you could replace with something else?

Read the labels and warnings on products and take advice from HSE on how best to handle them if you are in any doubt. Sometimes simple measures are best, for example, allowing participants in an art class to use spray mount or fixatives, but only outside!

b. machinery

We use power tools so frequently now that we hardly ever stop to think about potential health and safety implications. Many small hand tools, as well the larger usual suspects, pose a significant hazard to health. You may have asked Bob the Builder to build scenery for the pantomime every year, but if he hurts himself, it will be your responsibility.

So make sure:

- those using machinery and power tools have been shown how to use them or are competent to use them
- children are not allowed to use them
- you have a circuit breaker to prevent electrocution
- any recommended safety precautions are taken, for example, wearing protective eye wear
- that they are stored out of harms way and they are maintained in good condition.

For larger equipment and machinery, for example kilns, you may want to delegate responsibility for use and for ensuring they are checked for safety on a regular basis to one particular person.



c. temporary spaces

You will need to be especially vigilant in temporary arts spaces. Depending on what you are doing, make sure you have thought about:

- the safety of the electricity supply and cables
- the hazard of tripping over cables
- exposed bolts, metal and other hard objects that might cause harm
- fire and emergency procedures
- storage of substances harmful to health and machinery
- emergency lighting
- fire extinguishers
- emergency procedures

d. crowd control

When you are putting on a performance or staging an event of whatever kind, there are special health and safety considerations:

- how do people evacuate the building or space in an emergency?
- who is responsible for first aid and how can they be contacted?
- how is the density of the crowd managed?
- what training have stewards had and what training will they need?
- how will you communicate with different members of your team?
- what procedures do you have in place for handling violence or threatening behaviour?

Insurance

Don't wait until you are forced to review your insurance because of an accident. Have what you need to protect you against liability before the need for it arises. This is an essential part of managing health and safety.

Insurance is a complex area, especially for voluntary and charitable organisations. Don't deal with it on an ad hoc basis. Give one person, preferably on the management committee, the task of making sure you are adequately covered and of reviewing your insurance needs each year when your policies are up for renewal. It is a good idea to find a helpful insurance broker to save you time and money in the long run. Choose one that is unlikely to charge you for their services (they obtain commission from the insurance companies instead).

Types of insurance:

i. employer's liability insurance – if you employ staff you are required by law to have this insurance. Employer's liability insurance covers your employees in the event of an accident, disease or injury caused or made worse as a result of work. If you work with volunteers, be aware that in some recent legal cases volunteers have been considered to be employees by industrial tribunals. So if you are in any doubt, get specialist advice either from an insurance broker or an employment lawyer.

ii. public liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance – do you work with the public? If so, it is a good idea to have public liability insurance. This insurance covers individuals (other than employees) and organisations in the event of an accident, injury or death, or damage to, or loss of property caused through the negligence of someone acting with the organisation's authority, including the action of your volunteers.

ii. vehicle insurance – If you operate your own vehicles you must make sure you've got the right insurance and that they are only used for the purpose stated in your insurance. Make sure you know what is excluded from your insurance, if, for example drivers need to be of a minimum age.

iii. special events – If you are putting on an event outside you will need to check your insurance position. Events such as firework displays or performances involving special effects, machinery or equipment are likely to demand additional insurance. Check with your broker.

iv. other organisations

When you use contractors, or invite other organisations to take part in your events, make sure they have the necessary insurance for their activities. This will safeguard you, your employees, volunteers and the public.

Other relevant insurance might include:

Third party insurance; buildings insurance; insurance for plate glass windows (for properties with shop fronts); personal accident insurance; product liability insurance; own vehicle insurance; contents; loss of documents and data; loss of fees; medical care and assault; legal expenses; cash; interruption of trade; theft; fire and flood; accident.



Make sure you read and understand the exclusions i.e. circumstances which are excluded from cover (the small print). Make sure too that you disclose all facts when you take out your policy, and any changes in circumstances when you renew it. (if material is not disclosed or the application form is inaccurate the insurance company may refuse payment of a claim). Record all information and keep two copies of the policy. Keep one away from the premises.

Further information

Information on health and safety

- a. The Health and Safety Executive is your essential starting point. See www.hse.gov.uk or contact them on their helpline: 08701 545500. They produce many publications which are free, or can be downloaded from their website, including:
- Stating your business: guidance on preparing a health and safety policy document for small firms. INDG 324
 - Five steps to risk assessments INDG 163

b. www.hsedirect.com – The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the publisher Butterworths Tolley have jointly launched HSEdirect, an online health and safety information service, which is designed for anyone with responsibility for health and safety issues and management in the workplace. This has a subscription charge for the online database, at present £20 for a day visit, or £199 for an annual subscription. A free preview of some of this information is available on the site. The free area of the website includes daily news, HSE press releases, a conference diary and useful contact details. email: enquiries@hsedirect.com
HSEdirect information hotline **T: 0845 300 3142**
(charged at local rate)

c. www.sandy-a.dircon.co.uk/legal.htm#h&sdirectors – New guidance on the health & safety responsibilities of company directors (also applies to charity trustees, and committee members of organisations who are not companies or charities).

Useful publications include:

VAN's Briefings 51 and 52

How do we deal with goods and services?

Parts 1 and 2

give more advice on how to choose a broker using a purchasing policy and procedures to ensure you get best value for your money.

The Health and Safety Handbook: for voluntary and community organisations

Al Hinde, Charlie Kavanagh, Editor Jill Barlow.

Directory of Social Change in association with Liverpool Occupational Health Project.

ISBN 1 900360 25 X £12.50

www.dsc.org.uk **T: 020 7209 5151**

Health and Safety: first principles

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, 1998

ISBN 1 902423 00 7

Available from: The Centre Support Team, Training Division, CIEH, Chadwick Court, 15 Hatfields, London SE1 8DJ. www.cieh.org.uk

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health also offer courses and qualifications in health and safety.

Voluntary but not amateur: a guide to the law for voluntary organisations and community groups

5th Edition. London Voluntary Services Council, 1998.

ISBN 1 872582 22 2 £14.95

www.lvsc.org.uk **T: 020 7700 8104**



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