

Developing a risk register

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What's a risk register?

A risk register is a simple and effective tool you can use to help you identify, document, and manage the risks facing your organisation.

There are many benefits associated with using a risk register. These include:

- Planning out any known risks associated with your day-to-day and assessing both their likelihood and impact.
- Identifying actions (mitigating actions) to lessen their likelihood and reduce or control their impact.
- Reducing the number of unexpected circumstances and issues that you have not foreseen and therefore have not planned for.
- Documenting the known risks and mitigating actions in a transparent way so that you can share them with your committee/trustees, volunteers, staff, and other relevant partners in order to create a collective approach to owning and managing risk.
- Being able to regularly review risks and identify additional resources, training needs or actions required to manage them.
- Supporting your continuity, emergency, and succession planning.

What's the difference between a risk register and a risk assessment?

Risk registers and risk assessments are important documents. Both deal with assessing, reducing, and managing risk but each has a very different focus and function.

A **risk register** is a document that sets out and assesses the risks that may directly affect the day-to-day running and sustainability of your organisation. It's a tool that should be used to help manage and govern your organisation and is sometimes a requirement of compliance processes.

A **risk assessment** focusses on managing the health and safety aspects of your organisation including the activities you carry out and the equipment you use as well as those you provide to your participants and visitors. It helps you to assess and control the risk of accidents or injuries to everyone involved and is necessary to comply with Health and Safety law. It is a requirement of Swim England affiliated organisations.

You can find general advice on creating a risk assessment on the [Health and Safety Executive](#) website. Additional guidance can be found in our 'Creating a risk assessment' document on the Club Matters website.

Developing a risk register

Developing a risk register should be a straight-forward process. This seven-step guide, which is adapted from PRINCE 2 (a management method) and will help you develop your own risk register.

Step 1 – Involve the right people and get their buy in:

It is important to involve key people within your organisation when developing your risk register. It's advisable to involve and obtain the support of all of your committee members or trustees, as well as trusted senior individuals. This will help to ensure that risks and issues have been considered across all areas and that there is agreement on the likelihood, impact, and mitigating actions to be taken. However, ensure that at least one person does have overarching responsibility for creating and maintaining the register.

Step 2 – Identify and categorise risk:

It's good practice for your club or organisation to think about and categorise risk under different headings. We know that every club or organisation is different, so it's important to ensure your risk register considers general organisational risks as well as any unique and specific considerations that you are facing now or are ever likely to face in the future. We've provided a number of general headings below for you to think about. This list isn't exhaustive but does cover a large number of the risk categories usually associated with running a club or organisation.

- **Vision, aims, and objectives** – risks that will stop your organisation achieving its overall vision, aims and objectives.
- **Legal structures** – risks relating to the way that your organisation is structured, and if your structure is fully understood and appropriate.
- **Liabilities** – risks relating to your organisation's liabilities and that of its participants, members, or volunteers; for example, if they're liable for any costs or damages associated with the club or organisation based on your legal structure etc.
- **Governance** – risks relating to good governance practices.
- **Committee** – risks associated with how your committee is run, or its succession planning (if committee members are to leave their positions).

- **Policies and procedures** – risks associated with the completeness and coverage of your policies and procedures (for example safeguarding policy, normal and emergency operating procedures, and codes of conduct).
- **Finance and sustainability** – risks relating to the financial management and financial sustainability of your organisation (for example, do you have sufficient reserves in place for emergencies? are your income streams secure etc?).
- **Legal and reporting requirements** – risks related to the requirements of statutory laws, statutory bodies, and funders (for example, health and safety, VAT and Tax etc.).
- **Insurance** – risks related to having sufficient insurance cover in place to meet your needs.
- **Safeguarding** – risks related to keeping children and adults safe (for example, the recruitment, deployment, and retention of volunteers/staff or reporting procedures from a safeguarding perspective).
- **Data protection and GDPR** – risks associated with data protection and security including data breaches or GDPR issues.
- **Inclusion and equality** – risks that would prevent your organisation being open and accessible to all prospective members, participants, and volunteers.
- **Membership and participant numbers** – risks associated with a drop or surge in your membership and participant numbers.
- **Volunteers or staff numbers** – risks associated with the volunteers, coaches, and other staff that you need to run your activities and facilities safely and efficiently.
- **Experience satisfaction** – risks associated with low levels of satisfaction in the activities and services you offer and the experience of your members, participants, parents and carers, volunteers, or any staff.
- **Reputation** – risks associated with any potential damage to your organisation's reputations.
- **Facilities and equipment** – risks associated with the condition or availability of facilities and equipment.

Step 3 – Assessing risks likelihood, impact, and overall rating:

Once you've identified the key risks that could affect your organisation, the next step is to assess their likelihood, impact, and overall rating.

Likelihood

Consider how likely or probable it is that each risk will occur and score it from 1 to 5 based on the criteria set out below:

- 1 – Very unlikely.
- 2 – Unlikely.
- 3 – Neither likely nor unlikely.
- 4 – Likely.
- 5 – Very likely.

Impact

Assess the impact each risk could have if it occurred. When determining the impact, consider both the internal and external impact it could have. Score the impact of each risk 1-5.

- 1 – Very low impact.
- 2 – Low impact.
- 3 – Medium impact.
- 4 – High impact.
- 5 – Very high impact.

Overall rating

Once you've scored the likelihood and impact of each risk, you'll be able to calculate its overall risk rating. To do this, multiply the likelihood score by the impact score (for example, $3 \times 4 = 12$). You can then grade each risk low, medium, or high and colour code them green, amber, or red (RAG).

1-8	Low
9-17	Medium
18-25	High

Please note that any risk that is rated as **medium or high** should be reviewed regularly by your committee or trustees and senior officials, ideally as a standing agenda item on your regular committee and trustee management meetings.

Step 4 – Identifying mitigating actions:

Mitigating actions are actions you've designed to lessen the likelihood and/or impact of each risk. These might include the application of good practice, embedding clear policies and procedures, staff training, regular reporting, regular communications with participants and volunteers, establishing finance and audit sub-committees etc. An example is provided in the box below:

Example

Committee members have a fixed term of three years. Two committee members have terms that finish at the end of the season. This is a risk to the club/organisation because these individuals are experienced, and their departure will also mean that you are two members short on your committee. Possible mitigating actions that could be taken in the months leading up to their departure include:

- Reviewing or creating a succession plan.
- Identifying if there are any specialist skills or experience required to fulfil the roles.
- Creating or reviewing role descriptions and person specifications.
- Advertising and recruiting to roles in advance.
- Electing new committee members via the AGM/EGM.
- Providing the required training and/or incorporating a handover period between the existing and new members to ensure they fully understand their role and responsibilities.

Step 5 – Appoint a risk owner:

For each risk identified, select the most appropriate person within your organisation to monitor and manage it. They'll be responsible for continually assessing the risk, identifying, and implementing mitigating actions and providing updates to the committee or trustees and appropriate. Where relevant, there can be more than one owner for risks (for example, if your club or organisation have sub-committees).

Step 6 – Arrange regular risk reviews:

Your risk register should be kept as a live document with updates reported to your committee/trustees/leadership team on a regular basis. Any changes to a risk's likelihood or potential impact should be discussed and reflected in the risk register, along with any further mitigating actions required as a result. It's important to flag any medium or high risks at regular committee meetings and discuss mitigating actions to ensure they don't have a significant impact.

Step 7 – Recording risks:

When completing your risk register it's important to include basic details that you can refer to and update as appropriate. These should, as a minimum, include the date the risks were added to the register, a description of the risk, the level of risk, the risk owner, the mitigating actions, and its status (for example, if it's current, ongoing, future, or completed). It's important to provide a clear description of the risk so your committee, trustees, or leadership team aren't required to remember specific details from one meeting to the next, and their status can be included to easily track progress.

Template risk register

Risk	1	2	3	4
Date logged				
Risk category				
Risk description / issues				
Risk owner				
Likelihood (1-5)				
Impact (1-5)				
Overall rating (L x I) & RAG rating				
Proximity (current / ongoing / future / completed)				
Mitigating actions				
Notes				

Please note that Swim England is not in a position to review, assess and/or comment upon a club or organisation's risk register.

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